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4	PUBLIC MEETING TO PRESENT
5	the
6	DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
7	for the
8	SALE OF PLUM ISLAND, NEW YORK
9	
10	October 18, 2012
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15	Meeting held at the Greenport High School Auditorium
16	720 Front Street, Greenport, New York
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(The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m.) 1 2 MR. WALTON: Good evening. We're going 3 to go ahead and get started. I'm going to have to work it this way to start off with. 4 This microphone has, I think, limited capacity 5 for us. So, if you can't hear, I'd ask you 6 7 again to move closer. I believe everyone, if we're relative -- if we're in the front part 8 of the room, we'll be able to hear. And if we 9 10 can minimize any side conversations, I think that will help as well. So I apologize, but 11 it seems like our microphone is not very happy 12 13 this evening. 14 Starting over, thank you for joining us this evening for this meeting to discuss the 15 16 Draft Environmental Impact Statement concerning the sale of Plum Island, the 17 process being conducted by the GSA, Department 18 of Homeland Security. 19 20 Before we get started, a couple of quick 21 housekeeping items. One, if you're not 22 already aware, restrooms are located out the back and to the right as you exit down the 23 hallway. Please feel free to leave and return 24 25 at any time during the meeting.

Also, if you brought a cell phone or a 1 similar mobile device with you that might 2 3 ring, please turn it on mute or turn it off to be considerate to others in the meeting. 4 My name is Lee Walton. I'm a Public 5 Relations Officer with AMEC, Environment and 6 7 Infrastructure. AMEC is a consultant and contractor to the General Services 8 9 Administration, GSA, and we have worked with GSA, Department of Homeland Security and 10 11 participating partners to prepare the draft EIS for the sale of Plum Island. 12 13 I'll be the moderator for the meeting 14 this evening. Our agenda, as you can see, has included open house time to review documents 15 16 available in the lobby. We'll have a presentation, approximately 30 minutes of 17 18 presentation time, after which we'll take a short break, and then we will enter into a 19 20 public comment period. 21 Several of you, when you signed in, you 22 provided me with comment forms, and I will call for public comments based on these 23 documents. If you decide after the 24 25 presentation that you would like to make a

- 1 comment or to be a speaker, or if you did not
- 2 provide me a form, there'll be an opportunity
- 3 to do that.
- 4 This meeting is being held in accordance
- 5 with provisions of the National Environmental
- 6 Policy Act, NEPA. GSA is the lead Federal
- 7 agency participating with the Department of
- 8 Homeland Security, and the analysis is
- 9 concerning potential environmental impacts
- 10 associated with the sale of Plum Island.
- 11 Notice of the draft EIS review meeting
- 12 and availability of the draft EIS has been
- 13 provided in local news and on the website.
- 14 This meeting will focus specifically on the
- 15 EIS related to the sale of Plum Island. Prior
- 16 Federal actions, including those related to
- 17 ongoing cleanup, or related to the new
- 18 facility to replace Plum Island as the
- 19 agricultural research facility are separate
- 20 Federal actions and are not a part of the
- 21 discussion tonight.
- Before we begin presentations, I'd like
- 23 to introduce representatives from GSA,
- 24 Department of Homeland Security that are
- 25 present tonight. First, John Kelly, John

- 1 Dugan, Patrick Sclafani, and Gabrielle Sigel
- 2 with GSA, and Dana Bouley with Department of
- 3 Homeland Security.
- 4 Additionally, joining me from AMEC are
- 5 Josh Jenkins and Mark Stelmack.
- 6 This team has been working together to
- 7 prepare the documents, and in the process will
- 8 be described in the presentation.
- 9 I'd also like to introduce
- 10 representatives of the Town of Southold that
- 11 I'm aware are here this evening, including Al
- 12 Krupski. Mr. Krupski, thank you. And Heather
- 13 Lanza.
- Okay. Are there any other representatives of
- the Town of Southold or of Suffolk County?
- 16 MR. TERRY: The Supervisor and
- 17 Councilman Ruland are at another meeting at
- 18 the Firehouse in Greenport and will be here
- 19 shortly.
- 20 MR. WALTON: Thank you. Sir, your name?
- 21 MR. TERRY: Mark Terry, Planning Board.
- MR. WALTON: Mark Terry. Thank you.
- 23 MR. WILSENSKI: Don Wilsenski, Planning
- 24 Board Chairman.
- MR. WALTON: If we can get your names

- 1 afterwards for the record, that would be
- 2 appreciated. Thank you.
- 3 Additionally, Sunny Suchdeve,
- 4 representing Senator Gillibrand's Office, is
- 5 here tonight.
- 6 Again, following the presentation
- 7 tonight, you'll have an opportunity to present
- 8 your comments and make statements for the
- 9 meeting record.
- 10 Our Court Reporter this evening is Lucia
- 11 Braaten. She will be recording all comments,
- 12 and as well as presentations. And it's very
- important and in her interest that we speak
- 14 slowly, deliberately and clearly.
- Tonight we invite your participation, we
- 16 invite your comments, and we also hope that
- 17 the presentation that we provide to you will
- 18 provide information and clarification about
- 19 the purpose and nature of this draft EIS.
- 20 And if you were not informed on your way
- 21 in, there are two types of comment forms.
- 22 There is the comment form for written
- 23 comments, which you may complete and leave
- 24 with us this evening, there's also a project
- 25 website. There's a form with the website and

- 1 the agenda, and on the project website is an
- 2 online comment form opportunity.
- 3 So, at this time, I would like to
- 4 introduce the first speaker, first presenter,
- 5 John Kelly, with General Services
- 6 Administration.
- 7 MR. KELLY: Good evening. My name is
- 8 John Kelly. I'm the Real Property Disposal
- 9 Director for GSA's New England Office, and I,
- 10 too, would like to thank you for taking the
- 11 time to attend tonight's meeting.
- 12 Is it not working at all? Do you hear
- 13 me okay?
- 14 (Negative response from audience.)
- 15 MR. KELLY: Hello? Okay. I'll start
- 16 over. I'll try to be as loud as I can.
- 17 MR. WALTON: It's working.
- 18 MR. KELLY: Perfect. Thank you.
- 19 Good evening. My name is John Kelly.
- 20 I'm the Director of GSA's Real Property
- 21 Disposal Division out of the New England
- 22 Office. I, too, would like to thank you for
- 23 taking the time to attend tonight's meeting.
- 24 I look forward to hearing your comments later
- 25 this evening on the recently released Draft

- 1 Environmental Impact Statement for the sale of
- 2 the Plum Island property.
- 3 The Plum Island property, in lies the
- 4 Draft Environmental Impact Statement,
- 5 primarily consists of the 840-acre island and
- 6 the nine-and-a-half acre Orient Point support
- 7 facility. The property currently houses the
- 8 Plum Island Animal Disease Center. Department
- 9 of Homeland Security maintains custody of this
- 10 property and works with its sole tenant, the
- 11 United States Department of Agriculture on the
- 12 animal research mission.
- Over the years, the Island has been --
- 14 supported a broad range of uses -- I'll try to
- 15 make this work tonight, folks -- which has
- 16 resulted in the widespread development across
- 17 the Island, and today the Island is
- 18 essentially self-sufficient with an
- 19 established infrastructure and a diverse mix
- 20 of buildings, such as an historic lighthouse,
- 21 Army fortifications and support structures, a
- 22 modern 55,000 square-foot administration
- 23 building.
- Other improvements include harbor
- 25 facilities, parking areas, over four miles of

- 1 paved roads, eight miles of gravel roads.
- 2 Utilities on the property include undersea
- 3 cable for power, communication, power plant
- 4 with backup generators, a tank farm, fresh
- 5 water wells, a water distribution system, and
- 6 a waste water treatment facility. All the
- 7 utilities are in good condition and are
- 8 capable of supporting a range of future uses.
- 9 In addition to the undeveloped or built
- 10 environment, there are areas of wetlands, open
- 11 space, water tracts, and over six miles of
- 12 coastline that offers sandy beaches along
- 13 Gardiner's Bay and a rocky shoreline along the
- 14 Sound. The Island has elevations that range
- 15 from sea level to 90 feet.
- 16 Unlike privately owned property, Federal
- 17 property is not subject to local taxation to
- 18 zoning. So while the property has been
- 19 actively used by the government for over 100
- 20 years, it has never been zoned.
- 21 In 2008, Congress enacted Public Law
- 22 110-329, which mandated the sale of Plum
- 23 Island if a decision was made to locate the
- 24 animal research mission to another site. In
- 25 2009, after conducting its own study,

- 1 Department of Homeland Security decided to
- 2 locate the new animal research facility, the
- 3 National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, NBAF,
- 4 in Manhattan, Kansas. DHS documented this
- 5 decision in a recorded decision, dated January
- 6 16th, 2009.
- 7 The decision to relocate -- excuse me --
- 8 to locate the mission in Kansas and not on
- 9 Plum Island set in motion this sale process in
- 10 the preparation of a Draft Environmental
- 11 Impact Statement, pursuant to the National
- 12 Environmental Policy Act, or, as is more
- 13 known, NEPA.
- 14 Public scoping process formally began in
- 15 March, 2010. During the scoping process, we
- 16 sought and received numerous comments from the
- 17 public, United States Environmental Protection
- 18 Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the
- 19 Town of Southold, Suffolk County, State of New
- 20 York, State of Connecticut, non-profit
- 21 organizations, and many others. Comments
- 22 range from those that support a conservation
- and preservation use with public access to the
- 24 Island, to those that supported reuse of
- 25 existing facilities to preserve jobs.

1 The development of the Draft 2 Environmental Impact Statement, also known as an EIS, has been a collaborative venture where 3 4 the General Services Administration and the Department of Homeland Security act as joint 5 6 lead agencies in development and issuance of this document. In addition, we formally 7 enlisted the Unites States Fish and Wildlife 8 9 Service and the Environmental Protection 10 Agency as cooperating agencies in the development of the draft EIS through the 11 unique and beneficial expertise both agencies 12 13 bring to the process. 14 The multitude of comments received during the scoping period and the 15 16 participation of the cooperating agencies were essential to the development and issuance of 17 18 this draft document. We sincerely appreciate the considerable 19 time and effort spent by many of you in 20 21 drafting and submitting comments. They were 22 insightful, comprehensive and constructive. In fact, many of these comments and the 23 involvement of the cooperating agencies led to 24 25 the addition of the -- in the analysis of the

- 1 conservation, preservation, reuse alternative
- 2 that was studied as part of the EIS, so thank
- 3 you again for your efforts.
- 4 Preparation of an EIS is a significant
- 5 and resource-intensive undertaking. An EIS is
- 6 the highest level of analysis under NEPA and
- 7 one that provides the greatest opportunity for
- 8 public involvement. This EIS process has two
- 9 main purposes. It offers an impartial
- 10 analysis, significant environmental impacts,
- and provides an opportunity for the public to
- 12 comment on the proposed action.
- 13 It is important to know that while this
- 14 draft EIS presents four potential reuse
- options, it does not advocate nor adopt any
- 16 particular option. Furthermore, the reuse
- 17 options are not ranked based on the likelihood
- 18 of implementation.
- 19 The four reuse options for adaptive
- 20 reuse low density zoning, high density zoning
- 21 and conservation preservation were developed
- 22 to provide thorough and thoughtful comparisons
- 23 of potential reuses. GSA has no authority to
- 24 pursue any other -- any action other than the
- 25 sale of the property, nor does it have the

- 1 authority to place discretionary deed
- 2 restrictions on the property that would impact
- 3 future use or value. Similarly, GSA does not
- 4 have the authority to unduly influence the
- 5 redevelopment or reuse of the property.
- 6 However, GSA and DHS will comply with all
- 7 applicable Federal laws and regulations, which
- 8 could conceivably restrict the use of certain
- 9 properties, portions of the property. For
- 10 example, GSA's obligation to comply with the
- 11 National Historic Preservation Act may result
- in the placement of historic preservation
- 13 covenants on certain historic or
- 14 architecturally significant structures, such
- 15 as the Plum Island Lighthouse. This would be
- 16 accomplished through consultation with the
- 17 National Park Service, State Historic
- 18 Preservation Officer, and other appropriate
- 19 consulting parties.
- The action alternative analyzed in the
- 21 draft EIS is the sale of the property and not
- the reuse, redevelopment or long-term
- 23 preservation and conservation of the property
- 24 by the Federal Government. To that end, it is
- 25 our position that the administrative action

- 1 transferring title to the property from the 2 U.S. Government to a new owner will not result in an adverse effect on the environment. 3 4 Should significant new circumstances 5 arise, conditions change, or information come 6 to light that would have an effect on the 7 proposed action prior to the conclusion of the sale process, a supplemental Environmental 8 9 Impact Statement will be prepared. 10 It is our expectation that this document will provide essential information, which the 11 Town of Southold and other stakeholders, as 12 13 they undertake their respective activities, 14 they will ultimately control and influence the reuse of the property once it leaves Federal 15 16 ownership. Once the property leaves Federal 17 ownership, much like other privately owned 18 property, it will be subject to all applicable
- State, the County and local governments

environmental and land use regulations.

19

- 21 will all have critical roles in guiding the
- 22 future reuse of this property in working with
- 23 the new owner to ensure any proposed reuse is
- 24 compatible with the community's character,
- 25 preservation, recreation and conservation

- 1 objectives and its economic development goals.
- We understand the Town of Southold has
- 3 begun the zoning process and we anticipate a
- 4 zoning plan will be adopted in advance of the
- 5 public sale. We remain committed to assist in
- 6 these local efforts by sharing relevant
- 7 information to support all levels of
- 8 government in preparing for the sale of the
- 9 property and its ultimate transition from
- 10 government ownership.
- 11 Thank you again for taking the time to
- 12 attend tonight's meeting. I look forward to
- 13 hearing your comments. I will now turn it
- over to Mr. Dana Bouley from DHS for a few
- 15 brief comments.
- 16 MR. BOULEY: Thank you, John. Good
- 17 evening to everyone, and thank you very much
- 18 for attending this meeting.
- 19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Could you speak up,
- 20 please?
- 21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Could you pull the
- 22 microphone towards you?
- MR. BOULEY: I'm sorry.
- 24 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Pull the microphone
- 25 toward you.

1 MR. BOULEY: How is this is working, is 2 that better? (Affirmative response from audience.) 3 4 Good. Once again, good evening and thank you very much for coming. My name is 5 6 Dana Bouley. I'm the Chief Administrative 7 Officer or the Science and Technology Director for DHS. 8 I'd like to take time to emphasize the 9 number of points that Mr. Kelly has made, and 10 also to provide you with additional 11 information on the Plum Island operations 12 13 after the conclusion of the NEPA process. 14 As you have been told, the Plum Island activity is managed by the Department of 15 Homeland Security and has been since 2003. 16 17 Additionally, DHS jointly directs with 18 USDA resources for the oversight and management of the science related to the 19 animal disease mission. 20 21 Under the current plan, the proposed National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, NBAF, 22 once constructed, will replace the Plum Island 23 mission. NBAF will be constructed in 24 25 Manhattan, Kansas, and the mission transition

1 from Plum Island will take place upon its 2 completion. Between now and the final transition, 3 4 the DHS operations will remain in place, and I want to again emphasize that, they will remain 5 6 in place as an active and robust activity. 7 DHS will continue to budget for costs associated with maintaining and sustaining the 8 9 critical mission operations on Plum Island, 10 while also fulfilling its regulatory compliance, requirements in support of the 11 PIADC mission and its affiliated operations. 12 13 Once NBAF is able to support the animal 14 disease mission, the relevant Plum Island 15 laboratory facilities will be decommissioned 16 following a comprehensive decommissioning plan 17 that will be developed by DHS in coordination 18 with all relevant Federal, State, and local 19 agencies. 20 I want to assure you that this close coordination with the Federal, State and local 21 22 officials will be a continuation of ongoing 23 efforts of the Plum Island staff, the same staff that also work to keep your community 24 25 informed as to the status of the ongoing

- 1 project.
- 2 I would like to take a moment to
- 3 recognize some of their efforts. The Plum
- 4 Island staff has diligently worked, and will
- 5 continue working, with local stakeholders of
- 6 Connecticut and the New York side of the Long
- 7 Island Sound.
- 8 In the years since DHS has taken over
- 9 operations of Plum Island, their public
- 10 outreach efforts have been thoughtful and
- 11 sincere. Thanks to the Plum Island staff, a
- 12 community forum has been established. Tours
- 13 have been conducted for local stakeholders and
- 14 community organizations, and they continue to
- 15 work with First Responders to conduct training
- 16 efforts on the Island. All of these efforts
- 17 will continue between now and when the mission
- 18 transitions to NBAF.
- 19 Again, thank you very much for taking
- 20 the time this evening to join us, and I look
- 21 forward to hearing your comments. Thank you.
- MR. JENKINS: Good evening, everyone.
- 23 My name is Josh Jenkins, I'm with AMEC. AMEC,
- 24 as Lee had said, has supported GSA in this
- 25 undertaking for developing the draft EIS.

1 My responsibility over the course of the 2 last two years has been to coordinate resources with AMEC, and coordinate with GSA, 3 and overall help facilitate the process so we 4 could pull this study and document together. 5 6 The National Environmental Policy Act, 7 or NEPA, was an act passed in 1969 to serve as the National Charter for the protection of the 8 9 environment. It provides a framework for 10 evaluating consequences of major Federal actions that may affect the environment. 11 NEPA ensures that the social and environmental 12 13 factors are considered along with the 14 technical and economic components of a decision, and provides for potential 15 environmental impacts and any adverse effects 16 17 that cannot be avoided to be identified and 18 alternatives to be proposed to the proposed action to be considered. 19 20 The EIS process for the sale of Plum 21 Island included a public scoping period, which 22 included a public meeting, as well as coordination with Federal, State and local 23 agencies. We developed the draft EIS, which 24 25 would incorporate -- which has incorporated

- 1 scientific and technical data about Plum
- 2 Island, as well as comments received during
- 3 the scoping period.
- 4 The draft EIS outlines and discusses the
- 5 potential effects to the natural, cultural and
- 6 human environments from the proposed
- 7 alternatives. The draft EIS was made
- 8 available for public review this past July,
- 9 and comments received on this document will be
- 10 addressed in the final EIS.
- 11 After completion of the final EIS, GSA
- 12 will issue a Record of Decision, commonly
- 13 known as a ROD, that will be signed by GSA and
- 14 DHS. The ROD will document the Agency's final
- 15 action decision.
- 16 Under NEPA, the purpose of this draft
- 17 EIS is to examine the effects associated with
- 18 the anticipated sale of Plum Island and its
- 19 support facility at Orient Point, New York.
- 20 NEPA encourages Federal agencies to explore
- 21 alternatives where possible -- where the
- 22 objectives are eliminating or lessening
- 23 environmental impacts. It also provides for
- 24 the analysis of the no-action alternative,
- 25 which essentially provides a baseline of

- 1 potential impacts of the status quo versus any
- 2 changes. In this case, the no-action
- 3 alternative cannot be selected because it does
- 4 not meet the project purpose and need of
- 5 selling the property, as mandated by the Act
- 6 of the Congress. The action alternative for
- 7 this project is the sale of Plum Island by
- 8 GSA.
- 9 As noted, DHS would continue operations
- 10 at the existing facility until the new NBAF
- 11 facility in Manhattan, Kansas is operational.
- 12 The action alternative was refined into a
- 13 series of reasonably foreseeable land use
- 14 options. In response to the lack of certainty
- 15 concerning future reuse of the property,
- 16 reasonable land use options were developed and
- 17 evaluated in the draft EIS that could result
- 18 from the sale of the property.
- 19 Several potential future uses are noted
- 20 on the next slide. Four land reuse options
- 21 evaluated for the action alternative include
- 22 Option 1, adaptive reuse, and this option
- 23 looked at using the existing facilities and
- 24 infrastructure on the Island for commercial
- 25 research and other uses.

1 Option 2 evaluated land use and zoning 2 based upon comparable neighboring islands and zoning requirements here in the Town of 3 4 Southold, emphasizing low density development. Option 3, similar to Option 2, is based 5 6 upon zoning criteria here in the Town of 7 Southold, but with a higher density 8 development layout. 9 A conservation preservation option, Number 4, evaluates a public or private entity 10 which would protect, maintain and enhance 11 significant cultural and natural resources. 12 13 Educational and recreational resources could 14 also be developed as part of this option. This option was added as a direct result of 15 16 the scoping process in 2010. 17 These options were developed in the 18 draft EIS for analysis only with the intent to provide information for better decision-making 19 before and after the sale. 20 21 GSA has no authority to determine future 22 land uses, so, at this time, we do not know who would be purchasing the property, nor do 23 we know what the intended land uses will be. 24 25 When the property leaves Federal

- 1 ownership, any future reuse would be the
- 2 subject of local, State and Federal
- 3 permitting, and environmental and land use
- 4 approvals and regulations.
- 5 The draft EIS utilized the suitability
- 6 analysis to evaluate various land use options.
- 7 The suitability analysis is a tool commonly
- 8 used by land use planners to evaluate the
- 9 attributes that identified land areas that
- 10 would best be suited for future development.
- 11 The suitability analysis would evaluate
- 12 the following site attributes: Fresh water
- 13 and tidal wetland buffers and adjacent areas,
- 14 coastal barrier resource system areas, FEMA
- 15 digital flood insurance maps, New York State
- 16 DEC fresh water wetlands and national wetlands
- inventory, existing utilities, known potential
- 18 historic and cultural sites and environmental
- 19 sites, elevations, land contours and land
- 20 slopes. These attributes were individually
- 21 laid on the map and the resulting area with
- 22 minimal known restraints, which was determined
- 23 to be approximately 195 acres of land on Plum
- 24 Island.
- It is important to note that the

- 1 resultant maps showing potential development
- 2 parcels on Plum Island was created for
- 3 analysis purposes -- analytical purposes only.
- 4 This slide is the summary of the
- 5 affected environment and the resources of that
- 6 environment that the draft EIS evaluated. We
- 7 looked at natural, cultural and human
- 8 resources of the Island and Orient Point. And
- 9 using -- following these resources, we brought
- in various personnel who were knowledgeable of
- 11 each resource, so it was quite a collaborative
- 12 effort.
- The draft EIS evaluated each resource
- 14 within each reuse option as either no impact,
- 15 negligible, minor, moderate or beneficial.
- No impact simply means no impact was
- 17 anticipated with the action.
- 18 Negligible impact would be slight
- 19 adverse or beneficial impact that would likely
- 20 not be detectable.
- 21 Minor impacts are adverse, or beneficial
- 22 impacts that could be measurable, but within
- 23 historic and regulated limits. Moderate
- 24 impacts would be adverse, or beneficial
- 25 impacts that would readily be apparent.

- 1 Adverse impacts outside historic baseline
- 2 would require offsetting mitigation.
- 3 Each resource was evaluated and impacts
- 4 were summarized and included in the draft EIS.
- 5 The impact summary poster is provided here
- 6 tonight out in the lobby, it summarizes that
- 7 information. And generally, on that poster,
- 8 what it shows is that there would be no
- 9 negligible impacts overall if an adapted reuse
- 10 option would be selected. Minor to moderate
- 11 impacts to the natural and cultural resources
- 12 would be expected under a low density and a
- 13 high density under those two options.
- 14 However, development could also increase state
- 15 and local tax revenue and be considered
- 16 beneficial.
- 17 Beneficial impacts are expected to
- 18 natural resources under a conservation and
- 19 preservation option. Other resources under
- 20 the conservation and preservation option would
- 21 be expected to have no negligible impacts.
- 22 And, again, these are generalities, and
- 23 I, again, invite you to take a look at our
- 24 posters in the back.
- Other effects were evaluated if they

- 1 caused indirect or secondary impacts, or if
- 2 they were cumulative impacts that may occur as
- 3 a result of the sale and other actions. No
- 4 indirect or cumulative impacts are expected
- 5 from the sale. However, future reuse could
- 6 result in indirect or cumulative impacts at
- 7 some point after the sale.
- 8 The next steps after tonight's meeting
- 9 are to continue to receive the draft EIS
- 10 comments until the close of the comment
- 11 period. We are taking those comments, we're
- 12 reviewing them, categorizing them, and we will
- 13 address the comments, and then we will
- incorporate the comments and responses into
- 15 the final EIS. We'll issue the final EIS, and
- 16 after a 30-day waiting period, issue the
- 17 record of decision.
- Here is the timeline for the projects.
- 19 As you can see, the Notice of Intent to
- 20 prepare the EIS was published in the Federal
- 21 Register in March 2010. That served as the
- 22 official kick-off to the process. The scoping
- 23 phase of the project followed. Comments were
- 24 received into the summer of 2010.
- 25 After the scoping process was completed,

- 1 the team prepared, researched and evaluated
- 2 existing information and developed and
- 3 gathered new information and developed the
- 4 draft EIS. The draft EIS was published in
- 5 July 2012, and comments will be accepted until
- 6 October 26th. We will respond to comments
- 7 that are received, and then prepare the final
- 8 EIS, which is anticipated to be completed this
- 9 fall and winter.
- 10 Once the final EIS is completed, GSA
- 11 will prepare the Record of Decision to
- 12 document the decision.
- 13 As noted on this slide, if you have
- 14 comments on the sale of Plum Island and prefer
- 15 not to speak during the public comment period,
- 16 please get one of the comment cards in the
- 17 back when you walked in and complete it
- 18 tonight, or mail it to Mr. Phil Youngberg at
- 19 GSA. Please return your comments no later
- 20 than October 26th, so that we have time to
- 21 consider them during the preparation of the
- 22 final EIS this fall and winter. Thank you.
- MR. WALTON: Thank you, Josh. That ends
- 24 the presentation portion of our agenda this
- 25 evening. What we will do is take a short

- 1 break that will allow anyone who has not
- 2 indicated that they would like to speak to
- 3 come provide me your names so that I can call
- 4 on you. At this point, I have a dozen cards
- 5 from those who would like to submit comments
- 6 orally. Everyone is also invited to submit
- 7 written comments. And when you comment, we
- 8 request that you come to the podium and direct
- 9 your comments to the Court Reporter, most
- importantly, who will record every comment,
- 11 and certainly also to the GSA, DHS, and
- 12 consultant staff.
- 13 So we'll take a five-minute break.
- 14 Again, I would ask anyone who's having
- 15 difficulty hearing to move closer to the
- 16 front. The whole front row is free. After
- 17 five minutes, we'll begin the public comment
- 18 period, and I'll be glad to answer any
- 19 questions you might have.
- 20 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)
- 21 MR. WALTON: Okay. Again, I'm going to
- 22 ask all speakers making comments to focus your
- 23 comments towards the Court Reporter and to
- 24 make sure that they are clearly heard and
- 25 understood. Of course, everyone will hear,

- 1 but the primary audience is the Court
- 2 Reporter, and the GSA, Homeland Security and
- 3 consultant representatives.
- 4 Again, comments concerning the draft EIS
- 5 for the sale of Plum Island is the focus, and
- 6 we will have oral comments. If you do not
- 7 wish to speak, but wish to submit a comment,
- 8 there are comment forms on the sign-in table
- 9 where you may complete a comment tonight,
- 10 leave it with us.
- 11 Additionally, the website for the EIS
- 12 will remain on the screen. If you'd like to
- 13 note that or take a copy of the agenda which
- 14 has that website, it offers an online comment
- 15 option. And again, very importantly, the
- 16 comment period for the draft EIS will close on
- 17 October 26th.
- 18 The first speaker this evening is Scott
- 19 Russell.
- 20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: He's not here yet.
- 21 MR. RUSSELL: Yes, I am, right here.
- 22 (Laughter from audience.)
- MR. WALTON: Thank you, Mr. Russell. If
- 24 all speakers who are in the general area of
- 25 the podium, use the podium if you'd like.

- 1 This microphone is recording, and please
- 2 direct the comments towards the Court
- 3 Reporter.
- 4 MR. RUSSELL: Thank you.
- 5 MR. WALTON: Okay.
- 6 MR. RUSSELL: What I would first like to
- 7 do is I want to thank you for the opportunity
- 8 to address some of the proposals that had been
- 9 put on table for Plum Island.
- 10 I secondly want to reiterate that the
- 11 Town is very strong in one position and one
- 12 option, and that is to leave Plum Island as
- 13 Plum Island.
- 14 Plum Island serves principally as a
- 15 research facility of international renown. I
- 16 understand what's the scope of what you're
- 17 dealing with with the Federal legislation, so
- 18 I'm going to address more specifically some of
- 19 the options you have outlined.
- First issue, reuse of Option 3, high
- 21 density development of 750 units. That should
- 22 be removed from the EIS for several reasons.
- 23 There is no development pattern anywhere in
- 24 the Town of Southold that would provide a
- 25 basis for presenting that as a scenario, as a

- 1 reasonable scenario.
- I want to point out that Orient itself,
- 3 the hamlet right next door, is developed with
- 4 about 765 units. If you look at the land mass
- 5 of Orient, that works out to about five acres
- 6 per unit.
- 7 Community character and quality of life
- 8 of Orient residents would be significantly
- 9 impacted and diminished by the traffic to and
- 10 from this development.
- 11 Fishers Island, incidentally, another
- 12 island within our jurisdiction, is developed
- 13 at about five acres per unit.
- 14 Plum Island sole source -- sole source
- 15 aguifer would not support that type of
- 16 density. The cost of services to the Island
- 17 could potentially be higher than the property
- 18 tax revenues generated, causing increases in
- 19 property taxes for existing residences.
- I also want to talk about some of the
- 21 other options that you had outlined in your
- 22 EIS. Even the development of 90 units, I
- 23 believe the EIS estimates the taxes that would
- 24 be generated to be 42 million dollars. I have
- 25 to tell you, I'm a former Assessor for

- 1 Southold Town, former President of the Suffolk
- 2 County Assessors Association. Forty-two
- 3 million dollars is grossly exaggerated. I
- 4 would suspect that the taxes generated would
- 5 be about one-fortieth of that.
- 6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: How much?
- 7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: One-fortieth.
- 8 MR. RUSSELL: I'm sorry?
- 9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Say the number again.
- 10 MR. RUSSELL: The estimate in the EIS
- 11 states estimated revenue of 42 million
- 12 dollars. I suspect the taxes generated from a
- 13 90-unit proposal would be about one-fortieth
- 14 of that.
- The reuse, again, of Option 3, property
- 16 tax projections using the same incorrect
- 17 formula, claiming property tax revenue would
- 18 be about 352 million dollars. Again, I would
- 19 say that's at the very least ten times what
- 20 the actual taxes would be generated from that
- 21 island.
- I'd like to point out that we actually
- 23 have islands within our jurisdiction. Were I
- 24 to add up all the taxes collected on Fishers
- 25 Island, which is some -- depending on which

- 1 survey I use, twenty-six hundred to three
- 2 thousand acres of island, fully developed with
- 3 very nice estate homes, I don't collect that
- 4 money, adding all taxing districts together,
- 5 in any given fiscal year.
- 6 I would also like to suggest that Plum
- 7 Island, if it were to be prepped for sale,
- 8 should be considered as an excellent location.
- 9 And I realize, again, that Federal law
- 10 requires that the Island be evaluated for sale
- 11 to the market.
- 12 And I realize that under general Federal
- 13 quidelines, you would be able to offer this to
- 14 sister agencies. I would strongly recommend
- 15 that we revisit the Federal legislation.
- 16 Outside of your bailiwick, but I'll ask my
- 17 Federal representatives to reconsider Plum
- 18 Island. If it is not to be, then they
- 19 consider it, offering it to one of its sister
- 20 agencies, such as the Department of Energy, so
- 21 it could be used for alternative and renewable
- 22 energy production. But, again, let me point
- 23 out, that that would only be a Plan B. Plan A
- is for Plum Island to stay as a research
- 25 facility. Southold Town needs the meaningful

- 1 employment. And, frankly, I'm proud to have a
- 2 facility of international importance being
- 3 part of Southold Town. I would like it to
- 4 very much stay that way.
- 5 And the 600 acres that is more like a de
- 6 facto preserve right now should stay a
- 7 preserve. And Southold Town will be
- 8 addressing the code language in the very near
- 9 future, and I would encourage all of you to
- 10 come and participate in those discussions.
- 11 Thank you very much for your time.
- 12 (Applause)
- MR. WALTON: Thank you, Mr. Russell.
- 14 Next speaker is Steve Bertolino.
- 15 MR. BERTOLINO: Yes, good evening.
- 16 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
- 17 Mr. Russell, good job, I congratulate you on
- 18 that.
- 19 Let it be said that my name is Steve
- 20 Bertolino. I have no interest or affiliation
- 21 with any entity, group, or any affiliation
- 22 with any political system in the Town of
- 23 Southold.
- I can tell you that in my view this is
- 25 an issue that transcends our time. This is a

- 1 generational issue that will affect Long
- 2 Island and Long Island generations for years
- 3 to come.
- 4 I can tell you that mankind has
- 5 developed many, many uses of natural resources
- 6 that we've used for our benefit and societal
- 7 gains. We can look at the Hoover Dam, we can
- 8 look at the Eisenhower Interstate System.
- 9 Locally, we can look at the Robert Moses
- 10 development that gives us our interstate, that
- 11 gave me the ability to drive out here today
- 12 from western Suffolk County. On my drive out,
- 13 I passed cell phone towers, I passed one or
- 14 two solar systems up on some barns, some
- 15 farms. As a native Long Islander, I can tell
- 16 you that I'm proud that Southold has taken the
- 17 position that I believe they are taking.
- I implore the GSA, I know your hands are
- 19 somewhat tied, and I implore the employees,
- 20 the citizens, the residents of Southold to
- 21 look at this opportunity that you have before
- 22 you for the time that it represents.
- 23 I drive a boat across the Great South
- 24 Bay in western Suffolk County. Some of the
- 25 landmarks that I see out there are the

- 1 Brookhaven landfill. It is the highest
- 2 landmark I can see. When I'm in the western
- 3 part, towards Nassau, I can see the old Town
- 4 of Hempstead landfill. Fortunately, somebody
- 5 had a bright idea to put a windmill, one, up
- 6 on that. I think you see where I'm going with
- 7 this.
- 8 In the past, mankind has had the vision
- 9 to take our outer islands, if you will,
- 10 vestiges, and they've put up lighthouses to
- 11 guide mariners into port, because those were
- 12 the needs of the time. The needs of our time
- 13 are being met, but the needs of future
- 14 generations will not be met unless the
- 15 citizens, and the Board Members, and the
- 16 people in the Town of Southold, as well as the
- 17 GSA and AMEC, if you can realize the potential
- 18 that this particular parcel has for renewable
- 19 energies. And, again, I stress I have no
- 20 affiliation with any entity, commercial or
- 21 otherwise.
- 22 Community concerns are of the utmost
- 23 importance. I come out here or I have come
- out with my family for many, many years to the
- 25 farms, to pick pumpkins, to buy mums, to pick

- 1 apples. Yes, this is Long Island, this is
- 2 eastern Long Island, this is what we do. I've
- 3 also had the luck and the opportunity to
- 4 travel extensively by car across the United
- 5 States, and I can tell you there is no greater
- 6 vision than coming over Interstate 80 through
- 7 the Appalachian Mountains and seeing that
- 8 first windmill, and driving up Interstate 25
- 9 through Colorado and Wyoming and seeing these
- 10 renewable energy farms that are just the spine
- 11 of the future of our country.
- We on Long Island, I'm sad to say, are
- 13 way behind the rest of the world. I've
- 14 traveled through Europe, I've seen what these
- other countries are doing. We are in the 18th
- 16 Century.
- 17 Southold has the opportunity, the local
- 18 community has the opportunity to bring Long
- 19 Island to the 22nd and the 23rd Century. I
- 20 implore you once again to do that.
- 21 If you haven't already, go see these
- 22 other facilities. Pull them up online if you
- 23 can't get out there yourself. They also are
- 24 tourist attractions. My family and I may come
- 25 out here and pick pumpkins and go see the

- 1 windmills.
- I have some questions for GSA and AMEC.
- 3 Why are we waiting five years? The Federal
- 4 Government is not subjected to local zoning.
- 5 Federal Government should be implementing,
- 6 along with the input from the Southold Board,
- 7 Planning Department, and saying, "Hey, let's
- 8 get these towers built now. Let's get that
- 9 renewable energy there now."
- 10 And you know what, I'll buy the property
- 11 from you for a buck. I'll lease it out to
- 12 LIPA at a million bucks a year. Let's put up
- 13 40 windmills and generate megawatts, kilowatts
- 14 that we can -- I'm sorry -- megawatts to
- 15 provide the kilowatts that each household
- 16 needs. Take that revenue and give to the
- 17 residents of Southold. Why? Look at taxes.
- 18 Why say we're going to tax it? Let a
- 19 commercial enterprise build it. Under New
- 20 York State Law, once you convert that to
- 21 parkland, you can't do such a thing. You can
- 22 do that now.
- I can also tell you that I'm a resident
- 24 or I have a summer home on Fire Island. For
- 25 those of you who don't know, do not let the

- 1 Federal Government cram this down your throat.
- 2 Robert Moses, who I envy for his ability to
- 3 transform at least the Northeast, and what we
- 4 consider today a luxury of our travel
- 5 patterns, he wanted to take the Robert Moses
- 6 Causeway, which goes down and cuts across
- 7 Ocean Parkway, through Fire Island. But in
- 8 the 1960s, the communities, 17 communities
- 9 fought back. And with their Congressional
- 10 representatives, they were able to turn that
- 11 into the Fire Island National Seashore. It's
- 12 still now a mix of Federal parkland and small
- 13 communities. It also has the only national
- 14 wilderness area, the Otis Pike National
- 15 Wilderness Area. Why can't Plum Island be
- 16 turned into such a vehicle?
- 17 Combine Option 1 with Option 4. Why are
- 18 we limiting ourselves? Are we that tied to
- 19 such strict patterns where we have to say 1 or
- 20 4? Why not a reuse? If it's not going to be
- 21 a Federal reuse, make it a local reuse.
- 22 Combine it with -- forget Option 2 and 3, I'm
- 23 not even going there. I understand you have
- 24 an -- you have an obligation to propose that.
- 25 I can't see why any Long Islander, looking out

- 1 for the future of their generations and kids,
- 2 and kids -- and I'm not talking your kids, I'm
- 3 talking three generations down the road,
- 4 because when I go to Fire Island, I hear
- 5 stories of third and fourth generations. This
- 6 is my first generation there.
- 7 I would hope that the Town of Southold
- 8 would say to the Federal Government and their
- 9 representatives, "Let's get an Act of Congress
- 10 to make this happen." There's no reason why
- 11 local zoning has to wait five years for this
- 12 to go down. Do it now, do it with a
- 13 partnership.
- I have no interest. I'm from Bayport,
- 15 Town of Islip, but I come off the ferry from
- 16 New London, I don't see anything spectacular
- 17 as far as the view on Plum Island. It doesn't
- 18 do Southold any justice. Why maintain Plum
- 19 Island? Let it get out of here, let -- if
- 20 they're going, they're going. And, first of
- 21 all, they don't even have the funding, fully
- 22 funded, they got the first stage. They've got
- 23 a long way to go, so why is Southold waiting?
- With all due respect to all members of
- 25 the Board, Town of Southold, you guys might

- 1 not be here by the time this happens. But you
- 2 have the opportunity now to force your
- 3 Congressional representatives and the Federal
- 4 Government to listen to you so that you can do
- 5 what's right for the future generation and for
- 6 all of Long Island, not just the Town of
- 7 Southold. Thank you.
- 8 (Applause)
- 9 MR. WALTON: Thank you. Next speaker,
- 10 Marie Domenici.
- 11 MS. DOMENICI: I don't want to speak.
- MR. WALTON: You choose not to speak,
- 13 okay. Thank you. Next speaker, Mike Griffin.
- MR. GRIFFIN: Good evening. My name is
- 15 Mike Griffin. I'm a resident of East Marion.
- 16 For those from GSA, that's a little town
- 17 between here and Orient Point. I'm
- 18 representing myself as a citizen.
- 19 Coming to this meeting today, I thought
- 20 that the purpose of it was to receive input,
- 21 perhaps to have some change in the report.
- 22 But then, as I listened to the presentations,
- 23 it sounded like the only changes that were
- 24 going to come about were changes that occurred
- 25 in the scoping of the report, where

- 1 conservation was added as an option, which I'm
- 2 thankful for. But, nevertheless, it also
- 3 seems the purpose of the meeting is to have
- 4 comments go on record. So I'm going to go
- 5 ahead with the comments that I originally was
- 6 going to make, which will be brief.
- 7 I fish in Plum Gut and I'm interested in
- 8 preserving the present character of the Island
- 9 as far as wildlife is concerned, all wildlife.
- 10 The best option, as the Supervisor mentioned,
- 11 and I thank the Town Supervisor for his strong
- 12 remarks, is no action, to leave it alone and
- 13 let it be. Keep it to retain local jobs and
- 14 preserve existing character.
- 15 It doesn't make sense to take research
- 16 for hoof and mouth disease and move it to the
- 17 cattle center of Manhattan, Kansas, or
- 18 wherever it's going. The current labs have
- 19 done a great job and they should be rewarded
- 20 for their work, so, instead, they're being
- 21 punished and, seems to me, being moved away.
- 22 Nevertheless, it seems that this option is not
- 23 possible. If it's not possible, then I think
- 24 the options for development, both low density
- and high density, should be removed from the

1 report. 2 Tip O'Neill said that all politics is local, and the local politics here are that we 3 4 do not want low density or high density in this report for analysis or any other purpose. 5 6 Plum Island should be preserved for 7 conservation and education, with care taken to respect the historical importance of Plum 8 9 I understand that Southold Town has 10 zoning jurisdiction for local use, which is as 11 it should be. It is important for this 12 Federal meeting, however, to go on record with 13 these concerns, so that GSA knows what the 14 local priorities are and they are recorded as 15 such for your purposes. 16 I hope that the GSA uses its power -- it 17 could use its power, and maybe we'll ask, you know, Senator Gillibrand's representative to 18 assist, but recent experience with the sale of 19 20 the Coffee Pot Lighthouse to a buyer who is 21 unknown, and the potential sale of Gull Island 22 demonstrate the difficulties of local preservationist groups coming up with funds to 23 save landmarks. If the GSA were to provide 24 25 coordinating support for such a venture, it

- 1 could bring about a solution, which would
- 2 appeal to local communities, and bring a
- 3 positive ending to this whole process.
- 4 Thank you for this opportunity to go on
- 5 record.
- 6 (Applause)
- 7 MR. WALTON: Thank you. Next is Mr. Ted
- 8 Scherff.
- 9 MR. SCHERFF: My name is Ted Scherff.
- 10 I'm the Director of the Theodore Roosevelt
- 11 Sanctuary and Audubon Center. Thank you for
- 12 allowing me this opportunity to offer the
- 13 following comments on behalf of Audubon New
- 14 York, the State program of the National
- 15 Audubon Society, regarding the Draft
- 16 Environmental Impact Statement on the sale of
- 17 Plum Island prepared by the General Services
- 18 Administration.
- 19 The mission of Audubon New York is to
- 20 conserve and restore natural ecosystems,
- 21 focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their
- 22 habitats for the benefit of humanity and the
- 23 earth's biological diversity. Audubon has
- long been a leading advocate for the
- 25 restoration of Long Island Sound, and has

- 1 worked with many partners to monitor the bird
- 2 life on Plum Island and urge the protection of
- 3 irreplaceable habitats found on this island, a
- 4 Long Island Sound Study Stewardship site and a
- 5 jewel in the Atlantic Flyway.
- 6 As we stated in our comments on the
- 7 draft scope of the EIS, with its mixture of
- 8 rocky shoreline, sand beaches, wetlands, and
- 9 various upland shrub, grassland and forest
- 10 habitats, Plum Island stands out as a
- 11 critically important migratory bird stopover
- 12 site on Long Island Sound.
- In 1997, Plum Island was recognized as
- 14 part of the Orient Point to Plum Island
- 15 Important Bird Area because it supports a
- 16 great diversity of at-risk species, including
- 17 large concentrations of waterbirds.
- 18 While we appreciate the GSA and
- 19 Department of Homeland Security's recognition
- 20 of this Important Bird Area status,
- 21 unfortunately, we find the draft EIS to be
- 22 inadequate, relying on out of date and
- 23 incomplete data regarding the birds, other
- 24 wildlife, and plant communities found on the
- 25 Island. It does not go far enough to ensure

1 that the Island's unique natural resources 2 will be protected during a potential sale. Before moving forward with the final 3 EIS, we respectfully request GSA to complete a 4 full year, four-season biological inventory of 5 6 the Island to appropriately document the significant species and natural communities 7 found on this national treasure. 8 9 Upon completion of this survey, the 10 draft EIS should be revised and reissued to correct these inadequacies, and based upon the 11 new analysis, specifically endorse Reuse 12 13 Option 4, placing the undeveloped portions of 14 the Island off limits to development as the preferred use alternative. 15 16 We do not agree with the current draft 17 EIS's conclusion that the preferred action for 18 the sale of the Island without conservation restrictions, and believe this goes against 19 the Congressional Authorization for the sale, 20 which required actions to protect government 21 22 interests. It's important to note that protecting 23 the ecological integrity of Plum Island not 24 25 only makes good environmental sense, but

- 1 represents good fiscal policy as well. Bird
- 2 watching is the fastest growing outdoor
- 3 recreation in New York and across the nation,
- 4 and in 2006, the year for which we have the
- 5 most current figures, 3.8 million bird
- 6 watchers in New York contributed an estimated
- 7 1.6 billion, that starts with a "B", billion
- 8 dollars to the State's economy.
- 9 Ensuring the long-term protection of
- 10 this significant habitat, which supports such
- 11 a great diversity of bird species, will help
- 12 communities and businesses surrounding Plum
- 13 Island to continue to capitalize on this
- 14 ecotourism revenue.
- I thank you again for this opportunity
- 16 to provide these verbal comments tonight, and
- 17 Audubon will also submit detailed written
- 18 comments on these inadequacies as we see them
- 19 in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement by
- 20 the October 26th deadline. Thank you.
- 21 (Applause)
- MR. WALTON: Next speaker -- excuse
- 23 me -- Mr. Robert Hanlon.
- MR. HANLON: Good evening. I'm Robert
- 25 Hanlon. I'm a resident of Orient. I'm a

- 1 member of the Board of the Orient Association,
- 2 but I'm speaking today in my capacity as an
- 3 individual.
- 4 In reading the Environmental Impact
- 5 Statement, I was startled by the fact that
- 6 analyzing all the various factors, there was
- 7 not a single factor in which there was a
- 8 determination that there was a major impact on
- 9 the environmental quality of the Southold
- 10 Town, as well as Plum Island. And I'm making
- 11 an assumption, I hope it's true, that when the
- 12 Environmental Impact Statement is being worked
- 13 through, consideration is being given not just
- 14 to the immediate property that's in question,
- but all the properties that adjoin that
- 16 property, which in this case is all of -- at
- 17 least all of Southold Town.
- 18 Most -- I pay most attention, because
- 19 I'm parochial, to Orient, and Orient is the
- 20 community that's closest to Plum Island. To
- 21 suggest that there is no major impact on the
- 22 Town of Orient by the Reuse Option 2 or Reuse
- 23 Option 3 is mind-boggling.
- In all of Orient, there are
- 25 approximately 730 housing units, and a similar

- 1 number of residents, as was discussed by
- 2 Supervisor Russell. Seven hundred and fifty
- 3 additional units doubles the Town of Orient.
- 4 It puts it on a piece of land that is a
- 5 fraction of the size of Orient, and it moves
- 6 all the traffic to that new community that's
- 7 equal in size of Orient along one road.
- 8 There is one road that goes through
- 9 Orient. The seven hundred and some-odd people
- 10 that live in Orient now travel off that road
- in various streets all the way out to the
- 12 Point. The people who might live on Plum
- 13 Island would have to traverse all of Orient on
- 14 that one road and -- to get to the ferries
- 15 that are there.
- 16 The ferry that is there now is a
- 17 business ferry that runs a few times a day,
- 18 carries a small amount of people. There would
- 19 have to be a major ferry building -- a major
- 20 ferry facility put in place to move even 90
- 21 families or 750 families to Plum Island. That
- 22 ferry would have to run at -- in a constant
- 23 way.
- Right now, we have an issue with the
- 25 ferry that's already there for New London.

1 It's a great ferry, I use it, I love it. 2 also runs in front of my house, and there are periods of time, especially during the summer 3 season, when it is impossible for agriculture, 4 for homeowners to pull out of their driveway 5 6 to get on to the -- on to Main Road, because 7 the ferry traffic is so intense. The ferry traffic is hundreds of cars coming off the New 8 9 London Ferry in a continuous stream that 10 basically block the residents from getting access to Main Road. If you then increase 11 12 that process by putting in another set of 13 ferries, another set of cars going toward Plum 14 Island for the residents, that multiplies it 15 hugely. 16 To suggest that there is a minor impact 17 on traffic under the high density zoning is astounding. That it's a negligible impact for 18 the 90 units is even very highly questionable, 19 20 but to say that it's a moderate impact when 21 you more than double the size of the entire 22 community? In addition, there is really no 23 significant explanation as to how we're going 24 to deal with the various facilities that would 25

- 1 have to be in place if there are significant
- 2 numbers of residents there. How will their
- 3 fire services be provided? How will their
- 4 education be provided? How will their medical
- 5 needs be provided? All of those are critical
- 6 aspects.
- 7 Orient has a great service, Southold has
- 8 great services for its community, but it takes
- 9 a good deal of effort and a good deal of
- 10 energy and the resources that we have now. To
- 11 put a fire department that's going to deal not
- 12 just with a small research facility, but
- 13 numerous homeowners, which have a very
- 14 different level of need for fire protection, a
- 15 medical facility for people who live there,
- 16 especially vacationers, is a hugely
- 17 complicated thing for -- especially for a
- 18 location that is only served by ferry.
- 19 Shelter Island is a huge place and they
- 20 have real challenges, but they also have two
- 21 very large ferry services that run. And the
- 22 notion of having ferries running every 10
- 23 minutes or 15 minutes in season to serve Plum
- 24 Island is really kind of hard to imagine.
- 25 If the -- what's really astounding is

1 that when the analysis is done of the social 2 justice analysis, which is supposed to take 3 into account the impact on public schooling, 4 law enforcement, fire protection, medical facilities, the net characterization is that 5 6 building this development would improve those things for Southold and for the rest of the 7 8 community. Just generating tax revenue is not 9 an improvement of services. What comes with 10 that tax revenue --11 (Applause) What comes with that tax revenue is 12 13 obligations, and those obligations Southold is 14 working hard to meet and meeting them well. But just adding some small amount of housing 15 16 on the tax base, when you complicate it by the difficulties of a ferry-based location, 17 18 doesn't add up to an improvement in the overall quality of those services in the Town 19 of Southold, and especially not in the rural 20 21 character of Orient. 22 One of the things that is supposed to be attended to is the historic qualities of the 23 land use that is going on. Southold has made 24 25 extraordinary efforts to maintain the historic

- 1 qualities of its current land. The process to
- 2 purchase agricultural rights, to preserve
- 3 lands for the use of the entire community, to
- 4 allow development, because there always needs
- 5 to be some development, and support the
- 6 commercial ventures, both the farmers and the
- 7 businesses, is important. But also protecting
- 8 those things that make Southold the kind of
- 9 town it is, that drew the people who recently
- 10 came here, that have served the families that
- 11 have been here for generations, that is very
- 12 important.
- To build vast new housing developments
- on an island that has historically been
- 15 sparsely populated, if at all, and turning it
- into some kind of, you know, shore-front condo
- 17 resort is not the kind of thing that is in
- 18 keeping with the historic tradition of
- 19 Southold. To change the character, the
- 20 agricultural character of Orient in particular
- 21 and East Marion, which are very rural
- 22 communities -- after Greenport, it's really
- 23 different out here, and it really is a rural
- 24 and very, very low density residential area.
- 25 To change that dramatically by putting in all

- 1 these additional cars, and a ferry service,
- 2 and some commercial space where the current
- 3 ferry is, is not in keeping with the
- 4 historical uses that this area of the Town has
- 5 enjoyed and seeks to continue to enjoy in the
- 6 future. I'm not going to speak to the
- 7 other two options, because the -- Option 2 and
- 8 3 I found so startling, and I know others have
- 9 spoken to it. But I think that there really
- 10 has to be a reconsideration of even just the
- 11 numerical characterization, the
- 12 characterization of these impacts being
- 13 moderate or negligible on the Town of
- 14 Southold, and, in particular, the eastern
- 15 Hamlets of East Marion and Orient in the
- 16 current proposed plan. Thank you.
- 17 (Applause)
- 18 MR. WALTON: Thank you. Next speaker,
- 19 Mrs. Patricia Aitken. Patricia Aitken?
- 20 MS. AITKEN: Good evening. Good
- 21 evening, and thank you. My name is Pat
- 22 Aitken. I'm the Executive Director of Friends
- 23 of the Bay. We're located in Oyster -- sorry.
- 24 We're located in Oyster Bay, New York.
- 25 The decision for the reuse of Plum

- 1 Island requires a long-term region-wide view.
- 2 Plum Island lies within one of the most
- 3 heavily urbanized corridors in the United
- 4 States. It has significant ecological and
- 5 historic value and enormous potential public
- 6 recreational value.
- 7 Decisions affecting Plum Island should
- 8 be made with the best available scientific
- 9 information. This DEIS does not fully
- 10 evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed
- 11 sale of the property under any of the
- 12 alternative property reuse scenarios.
- 13 Plum Island has a highly productive
- 14 marine environment, rare plants, over 187
- 15 species of birds, many of them rare, and also
- 16 provides habitats for migratory birds. The
- 17 possible sale of Plum Island should be
- 18 carefully evaluated and its ecological and
- 19 historic significance be fully considered.
- The preservation of Plum Island is a
- 21 unique opportunity to keep a rare gem that we
- 22 will not see again in our lifetimes. Thank
- 23 you.
- 24 (Applause)
- 25 MR. WALTON: Thank you, Mrs. Aitken.

- 1 Next speaker, Oliver Longwell. Oliver
- 2 Longwell?
- 3 MR. LONGWELL: Thanks. My name is
- 4 Oliver Longwell. I'm the Communications
- 5 Director for Congressman Tim Bishop, and I'm
- 6 going to read this into the record as if the
- 7 Congressman were here tonight delivering these
- 8 remarks.
- 9 I'd like to offer my email address,
- 10 oliver.longwell, L-O-N-G-W-E-L-L,
- 11 @mail.house.gov, if you have any comments
- 12 you'd like to bring specifically to the
- 13 attention of the office and not go through the
- 14 regular, you know, online e-mail process.
- 15 I'll just go ahead and read this.
- "I oppose efforts to close the Plum
- 17 Island Animal Disease Center, PIADC, and sell
- 18 Plum Island. While I understand the impetus
- 19 for the General Services Administration to
- 20 seek public input on the potential sale of the
- 21 Island at this time, such a discussion is
- 22 premature given the uncertainty of Federal
- 23 funding and construction of the proposed
- 24 National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, or
- NBAF, in Manhattan, Kansas, which has been

- 1 slated to replace PIADC.
- 2 The estimated cost of NBAF as proposed
- 3 has increased from an initial cost estimate of
- 4 451 million dollars just a few years ago to an
- 5 estimate of well over one billion dollars
- 6 today, before construction has even begun.
- 7 Even if construction were to move forward, the
- 8 facility would not be fully operational until
- 9 the end of the decade, during which time PIADC
- 10 must remain open as the only facility in this
- 11 country suitable to study dangerous animal
- 12 diseases like Foot-and-Mouth.
- 13 Recent studies conducted by the National
- 14 Research Council, an arm of the National
- 15 Academy of Sciences, highlight the still
- 16 unanswered safety questions associated with
- 17 NBAF. When the National Academy of Sciences
- 18 last reviewed the NBAF proposal in 2010, it
- 19 indicated that an unacceptably high risk of a
- 20 release of Foot-and Mouth Disease in the
- 21 nation's heartland, a 70 percent probability
- 22 over a 50-year period. The Academy also
- 23 estimated the cost of a potential release of
- 24 Foot-and-Mouth Disease at up to 50 billion
- 25 dollars.

1 In response to that report, the 2 Department of Homeland Security released an updated risk assessment of the project that 3 4 indicated that the risk has been mitigated with additional design features. However, the 5 6 NRC reviewed this updated report and its findings, published on June 15th of this year, 7 indicating that the updated DHS risk 8 9 assessment relies on questionable and 10 inappropriate assumptions in calculating risk, especially in the methodology regarding human 11 These assumptions allowed DHS to 12 error rates. 13 reduce risk to de minimus levels, a contention 14 obviously not supported by the evidence. Accordingly, DHS commissioned the NRC to 15 16 complete a report on the merits of 17 alternatives to NBAF that would meet the nation's bio and agro-security needs. 18 Published on July 13th of this year, the 19 report focused on three specific futures for 20 21 the NBAF project, one of which is the continuation of activities at Plum Island 22 while building out BSL-4 capacity at other 23 laboratories currently equipped for zoonotic 24 disease research." Excuse me. "This is 25

- 1 precisely the path forward that I have been
- 2 advocating for several years now." Sorry.
- 3 Everybody's got a cold this time of year,
- 4 right?
- 5 "I supported the President's decision to
- 6 exclude funding for NBAF in his Fiscal 2013
- 7 budget request. As such, it is very likely
- 8 that Federal funding for NBAF and other
- 9 projects of similarly questionable viability
- 10 will be subject to additional scrutiny as
- 11 Congress moves towards consideration of
- 12 additional budget cuts in place of the
- 13 automatic sequestration following the end of
- 14 the calendar year pursuant to the Budget
- 15 Control Act.
- 16 Finally, any sale would transfer the
- 17 Island from Federal to local control in terms
- 18 of zoning and other issues. I look forward to
- 19 working with the Town of Southold to ensure
- 20 its future use meets with the support of the
- 21 community in the event that the Island were
- 22 to, in fact, be sold.
- It is evident that final decisions about
- 24 the futures of PIADC and NBAF have yet to be
- 25 made. Therefore, I strongly believe that

- 1 discussions regarding sale of the Island are
- 2 premature."
- 3 That being said, we have a good
- 4 relationship with the Supervisor's Office and
- 5 the Town Board, and we, you know, are eager to
- 6 hear from you in the community directly. And,
- 7 like I said, oliver.longwell@mail.house.gov.
- 8 Thank you.
- 9 (Applause)
- 10 MR. WALTON: Thank you. Next speaker,
- 11 Adrienne Esposito. Miss Esposito?
- MS. ESPOSITO: Good evening, everyone.
- 13 My name is Adrienne Esposito. I'm the
- 14 Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for
- 15 the Environment. We're a bi-state
- 16 environmental organization, working in
- 17 Connecticut and New York. We've worked for
- 18 almost three decades now on protecting the
- 19 Long Island Sound, and also protecting the
- 20 natural resources surrounding the Sound. So
- 21 it's within that context that I offer the
- 22 following comments:
- 23 The first thing is that we understand
- 24 that this is a DEIS based on the sale of the
- 25 Island and not necessarily on what will happen

- 1 to the Island, since you don't know that. And
- 2 that makes it a little more tricky and allows
- 3 you to be more general in your analysis.
- 4 However, even with that understanding, we find
- 5 that this DEIS is woefully and remarkably
- 6 deficient. Let me tell you why I say that,
- 7 for a number of reasons. Number one is that
- 8 it fails to protect the public interest for
- 9 this public resource. How does it do that? A
- 10 number of ways.
- 11 As you've already heard many times
- 12 today, the Island, even though it's over 830
- 13 acres, has about 750 acres of undeveloped
- 14 lands. That includes such features as 63
- 15 acres of maritime dunes, 45 acres of beaches,
- 16 44 acres of bluffs, 34 acres of intertidal
- 17 zone, 178 species -- 187 species of birds, and
- 18 the largest seal pullout cove anywhere in the
- 19 Northeast.
- 20 How will the sale and the development of
- 21 the Island impact those resources? We don't
- 22 know, they weren't assessed. How will the
- 23 sale of the Island impact such activities as
- 24 decommissioning of the facility? We don't
- 25 know, it wasn't assessed. How will we go

- 1 about remediating and also identifying the
- 2 vast areas of contamination on the Island? It
- 3 doesn't seem to assess that. And what I mean
- 4 by that is, for instance, I was at the Island
- 5 two years ago, I was lucky enough to have a
- 6 visit with actually some of the people in this
- 7 room, and we talked about what about the areas
- 8 of soil contamination, groundwater
- 9 contamination, and we were told such things as
- 10 there isn't any groundwater contamination.
- Now, as someone who's worked on sole
- 12 source aguifer issues for 27 years of her
- 13 life, I found this to be astounding,
- 14 particularly five minutes later when we were
- 15 told, "But there has been some underground
- 16 leaking storage tanks of fuel." I said, "Did
- 17 it get in the groundwater?" They said, "Yes."
- 18 I said, "That's groundwater contamination."
- 19 They said, "We'll get back to you."
- 20 So for us, we need to know before it's
- 21 sold where is the contamination? What soils
- 22 are contamination? We want maps of plumes.
- 23 That's what this buyer is going to deserve and
- 24 need in order to assess the value of the
- 25 property and what you're going to have to

- 1 clean up.
- 2 Also, another key ingredient is to do an
- 3 assessment of the groundwater in that sole
- 4 source aguifer. We need to know how much
- 5 groundwater can be withdrawn out of the
- 6 aquifer system on a yearly basis in order to
- 7 keep it a sustainable aquifer. If we withdraw
- 8 too much, we allow for salt water intrusion,
- 9 and that should be a driving factor in
- 10 determining the uses of that Island, whether
- 11 it's commercial, residential, or whatever it
- 12 happens to be. We need to know the threshold
- 13 of withdrawal from that aquifer to determine a
- 14 future use. No mention of that, no discussion
- 15 of that at all in the document.
- 16 You mentioned earlier that you felt that
- 17 the scoping hearing incorporated many of the
- 18 public comments, and I must respectfully
- 19 disagree, because at the scoping hearing,
- 20 which I was at, many of these same issues were
- 21 raised, and yet they do not appear in the
- 22 document.
- So we're going to ask for a couple of
- 24 things. One is that the public input really
- 25 get incorporated into the final EIS, that

- 1 these comments are not blushed over, but,
- 2 rather, are incorporated. Otherwise you need
- 3 to stop and halt the process of the EIS,
- 4 because we should not be dealing with this as
- 5 a hoax or a facade, or just moving it long to
- 6 get it through the administrative process.
- 7 This is our home. This is very
- 8 important to us. This will shape -- as
- 9 everyone said, this will shape us for
- 10 generations to come. We're not interested in
- 11 an administrative process, we're interested in
- 12 a real process, a meaningful process, a
- 13 process that will have value to us, and so far
- 14 we don't believe we have that process.
- We also find there's an inherent
- 16 contradiction in the way the Federal
- 17 Government is working. We have some Federal
- 18 agents -- agencies on one hand which are
- 19 aggressively charged with protecting our
- 20 natural resources, and aggressively charged
- 21 with protecting the environment, and then we
- 22 have other government agencies which are
- 23 selling those very natural resources off that
- 24 the other ones are trying to protect, so you
- 25 can understand our confusion in this.

1 So we believe there should be 2 collaboration with agencies such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental 3 Protection Agency, and it shouldn't -- to work 4 together to preserve this type of a resource. 5 So, in short to conclude, it is woefully 6 and unabashedly deficient. We need to have a 7 clear understanding of contamination, soil, 8 9 groundwater, and the potential impacts, all 10 the myriad of wonderful resources on that Island would have upon any kind of sale, which 11 12 would lead to, as you know, some type of 13 development. So thank you very much, 14 appreciate it. 15 (Applause) 16 MR. WALTON: Next speaker, Mr. Doug 17 Moore. Doug Moore? 18 MR. MOORE: Good evening. My name is Doug Moore. I am a resident of the Village of 19 20 Greenport, and for disclosure purposes, I am a 21 retired career Federal employee who happily 22 served his professional career at Plum Island. I should also mention, I currently am the 23 Chair of the Greenport Village Zoning Board of 24 25 Appeals. However, my points tonight are my

1 own. 2 I'd like to take one issue from some characterizations that are made about Plum 3 Island as being under intensive use. 4 Ι believe it would be better to characterize it 5 6 under active use, but during its military 7 times, perhaps the entire footprint of the Island was occupied by activities. But during 8 9 Plum Island's Animal Disease Center use, less 10 of the Island was used, and then certainly within the last 25 years, only a small portion 11 of the Island is in active use. And that 12 13 leaves, essentially by passive conservation, 14 the rest of the acreage of the Island in its natural state. I think during this period of 15 16 potential sale of the Island, that that's a 17 good thing, so that's the good news. 18 I'd just like to make a few comments about uncertainty and value, because I think 19 20 this is a very important issue concerning the 21 sale. A number of points were made tonight 22 about the indeterminate schedule for the creation of a new laboratory, which needs to 23 have funding before even construction can 24

begin. With this in mind, that produces a lot

25

- 1 of uncertainty about the future of Plum
- 2 Island. During this uncertain period, should
- 3 the Island be sold, there would be a
- 4 landlord-tenant relationship with the Federal
- 5 Government as the tenant for apparently quite
- 6 some time; again, more uncertainty.
- 7 And then, finally, the Town of Southold
- 8 will eventually be charged with assigning a
- 9 zoning status for the Island. I understand
- 10 this cannot occur until the Island is in
- 11 private hands, but I think it would be very
- 12 valuable for the Town to make a commitment as
- 13 to what its intention is, and, unfortunately,
- 14 the directions that the Town is going. And
- 15 I'm not saying unfortunately as a bad thing,
- 16 but unfortunately for the sale of the Island,
- 17 I think this further diminishes the value of
- 18 the Island.
- 19 And the whole point I would like to make
- 20 is that with this uncertainty, I think this
- 21 has a major impact on the value of the
- 22 potential sale. And with that in mind, I
- 23 think there comes a tipping point where the
- 24 benefit of selling the Island does not
- 25 override the possible detriment that might

- 1 occur to the Island should it be sold, and
- 2 perhaps the best thing is that it remain in
- 3 government hands. Thank you.
- 4 (Applause)
- 5 MR. WALTON: Next speaker, Mr. Thomas
- 6 Foster. Thomas Foster?
- 7 MR. FOSTER: My name is Thomas Foster, I
- 8 live in Peconic. I'd just like to offer a few
- 9 additions to what Mr. Hanlon said and Mr.
- 10 Russell said.
- I have a question about the methodology
- 12 of the Environmental Impact Statement, how it
- 13 was developed, because when I read -- and I'm
- 14 just going to specifically talk about traffic;
- it doesn't appear to be the area that I am
- 16 familiar with.
- Just as an example, there's a big
- 18 discussion in the draft statement about the
- 19 ferry that comes from Connecticut to Orient,
- 20 or Connecticut to Plum Island, that handles
- 21 the research scientists and other employees
- 22 who live in Connecticut. The fact is that if
- 23 this is developed as a residential, either
- 24 under 2 or 3, most of the people who go to
- 25 Plum Island will be New Yorkers. People from

- 1 Connecticut do not have vacation homes or
- 2 homes in Long Island, they stay in
- 3 Connecticut. They have their own shoreline,
- 4 it's great, it's beautiful, and it's
- 5 sufficient for them. So the whole idea that
- 6 you can compare the ferry from Old Saybrook to
- 7 Orient Point or to Plum Island to the ferry
- 8 that might be needed, as Mr. Hanlon said, to
- 9 take people back and forth from Orient Point
- 10 to Plum Island, it just doesn't make any sense
- 11 that you should make that kind of comparison
- 12 to Connecticut.
- Once Plum Island is no longer, if it
- 14 does become a non-research facility and a
- 15 residential area, I really think Connecticut
- is completely out of the equation, and that we
- 17 should concentrate on what the effects are
- 18 going to be on Route 25, the sole road that
- 19 goes to Orient Point, the sole access to Plum
- 20 Island.
- I also think that there's a lot of
- 22 discussion about the total number of cars, the
- 23 traffic that comes through on the current
- 24 ferry from New London to Orient and then goes
- 25 west to New York, or people coming east and

- 1 going to Connecticut. That has a total
- 2 number, but there's no information about the
- 3 peak number.
- 4 And as Mr. Hanlon said, what we
- 5 experience in Orient Village is a great quanta
- of suddenly there's a huge amount of traffic
- 7 that might go for 10 or 15 minutes, and then
- 8 the traffic goes down again. It's a little
- 9 bit less going east because people don't make
- 10 their schedules. But when people exit from
- 11 the ferry, they're all exiting at the same
- 12 time, it comes through, and I don't think
- there's been an adequate study of what the
- 14 affect of that concentrated stream of traffic
- 15 is.
- 16 So those are the two things that I would
- 17 like to see and address, and how you're going
- 18 to actually analyze what I consider to be the
- 19 potential very negative, very severe impact of
- 20 additional traffic in either scenario two or
- 21 scenario three, as proposed in your draft
- 22 statement. Thank you.
- 23 (Applause)
- MR. WALTON: Next, Jane Fasullo. Miss
- 25 Jane Fasullo? No? Okay. Thank you.

- 1 Next speaker, then, Randy Parsons. Randy
- 2 Parsons?
- 3 MR. PARSONS: Good evening. I'm here on
- 4 behalf of The Nature Conservancy of New York,
- 5 Long Island. I submitted written comments to
- 6 Mr. Youngberg. I'm not going to get into that
- 7 level of detail, but I have given him written
- 8 comments with attachments. I'll just hit on
- 9 some of the points of that.
- 10 We believe that there's only two options
- 11 considered in the DEIS that are viable, the
- 12 adaptive reuse and the conservation
- 13 preservation.
- 14 As far as the deficiencies of the
- 15 Environmental Impact Statement, recognize a
- 16 lot of work went into this, there's a lot of
- 17 detail, a lot of analysis. But if GSA and DHS
- 18 want to continue to go down this road through
- 19 this process, we would submit that the
- 20 following deficiencies need to be addressed:
- 21 Four-season biological inventory has
- 22 been suggested, both at the scoping meeting
- 23 and again tonight. We think that in order for
- 24 you to really know what's out there, you have
- 25 to do four-season field work. We've done our

- 1 best to supplement the biological data with a
- 2 report prepared by the New York Natural
- 3 Heritage Program, which is a partnership
- 4 between the Department of Environmental
- 5 Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, and the
- 6 SUNY system. I'll give you a copy of that;
- 7 I've given Mr. Youngberg one.
- 8 We feel that there needs to be more
- 9 discussion about the contradiction in Federal
- 10 policy, which was mentioned earlier,
- 11 consistency with the National Estuary Program.
- 12 The DEIS does not adequately address the
- 13 potential impacts of the proposed action on
- 14 the National Estuary Program and the two
- 15 National Estuaries surrounding the property,
- 16 Long Island Sound and the Peconic Estuary.
- 17 The DEIS should provide additional
- 18 analysis of the following questions:
- 19 How does the proposed action further the
- 20 public policies and goals previously
- 21 established by Congress when it enacted the
- 22 National Estuaries Program, by EPA when it
- 23 designated Long Island Sound and the Peconic
- 24 Estuary as estuaries of national significance,
- 25 and by the States of New York and Connecticut

and the EPA, when together they approved 1 2 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans for both estuaries? 3 4 How would the proposed action impact the previous designation of the property as a 5 6 stewardship site pursuant to the Long Island 7 Sound National Estuary Program? Which proposed option is most consistent 8 9 with these previously established public policies and public investments? 10 11 How can GSA and DHS help insure that a 12 private buyer of the Island will protect the 13 natural resources important to the national 14 estuaries in the same way GSA and DHS intends to insure the protection of historic resources 15 16 by including a deed covenant? 17 The State Coastal Zone Management 18 The agencies in New York, the New Programs: York Department of Environmental Conservation 19 20 and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection administer those 21 22 State's Coastal Management Programs. They are not listed among the agencies consulted in the 23 preparation of the DEIS. However, both of 24 25 these agencies must make a consistency

- 1 determination on the proposed action. A
- 2 discussion of the two state's Coastal Zone
- 3 Management Programs and how the proposed
- 4 action will impact their goals should be
- 5 included in the DEIS.
- 6 The interim period: The DEIS
- 7 establishes that the Plum Island Animal
- 8 Disease Center does work that is essential to
- 9 the national interest and it must be continued
- 10 without interruption. The DEIS also projects
- 11 that, in the best case, the new lab in
- 12 Manhattan, Kansas will not be ready to occupy
- 13 until 2021.
- 14 The nine-plus year period between these
- 15 hearings and the proposed sale of Plum Island
- 16 and the time when Plum Island Animal Disease
- 17 Center functions can be relocated to Kansas is
- 18 called the "interim period" in the DEIS.
- 19 However, there is no discussion about the
- 20 logistics of selling the Island while Plum
- 21 Island Animal Disease Center is operational.
- The DEIS fails to address how GSA and
- 23 DHS propose to sell Plum Island while there is
- 24 a national laboratory in residence there, and
- 25 not less than 24 toxic waste sites, which have

1 yet to be cleaned up. The DEIS should include a full discussion of the logistics of the sale 2 of the property at least nine years before the 3 4 Island is surplus to DHS needs and while there is ongoing cleanup of hazardous waste sites 5 6 generated by prior Federal use of the Island. 7 Alternative interpretations of Section 540 of the Consolidated Security, Disaster 8 Assistance and a continuing -- and Continuing 9 10 Appropriations Act. 11 What we've done is we've attached a copy of a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife 12 13 Service, which was sent to Mr. Kelly on 14 October 19th, 2010, and the letter gives a quite extensive interpretation, which is 15 different than -- different from the GSA 16 17 interpretation. 18 The Fish and Wildlife Service reads the language of the act to allow, for example, a 19 transfer of the Island at a minimal cost to a 20 21 sister Federal agency, such as the Wildlife --Fish and Wildlife Service. We think that this 22 letter from Fish and Wildlife should be 23 24 incorporated into the DEIS, and the 25 interpretation of the language of the act

- 1 should be discussed. I'm attaching a copy of
- 2 that letter.
- 3 We also think that the potential
- 4 positive impacts from the conservation option
- 5 could be beefed up. For example, a
- 6 continuation of the effort to -- what would be
- 7 the impact of a continuation of the effort to
- 8 inventory and protect significant natural
- 9 resources? And where appropriate, introduce
- 10 or reintroduce species not presently on the
- 11 Island. There's some discussion of that in
- 12 the report I'm going to attach.
- What is the -- what is the impact of
- 14 opportunities for public access to Plum Island
- 15 for education and research, nature viewing,
- 16 hiking, swimming, fishing, boating and
- 17 visiting historic Fort Terry and the Plum
- 18 Island lighthouse?
- 19 What is -- what about a discussion of
- 20 opportunities for additional investigation
- 21 into the historic and prehistoric resources on
- 22 Plum Island?
- 23 Further discussion of the benefits of
- 24 completing the cleanup of the 24 hazardous
- 25 waste sites, and a further discussion of the

- 1 fuel spill, which has been mentioned
- 2 previously and is in the DEIS.
- 3 And I quote from the DEIS, "There are
- 4 two New York Department of Environmental
- 5 Conservation spill numbers currently open for
- 6 a light non-aqueous phase liquid petroleum
- 7 spill being remediated north of Building 101.
- 8 An oil recovery system, installed in 2000, is
- 9 in place and is recovering free product from
- 10 this spill area. The combined recovery of
- 11 fuel oil from vacuum enhanced fuel recovery
- 12 and the automated recovery system has
- 13 collected 9,648 gallons of fuel oil as of June
- 14 2011."
- We're not given enough information about
- 16 the status of that spill, the plume, and,
- 17 again, we believe that this should all be
- 18 remediated before there's any discussion of
- 19 the sale to a private buyer.
- Our conclusion is that while the DEIS as
- 21 written includes a substantial amount of
- 22 detail and analysis, it is insufficient and
- 23 incomplete. We look forward to working with
- 24 DHS, GSA, Fish and Wildlife Service, and EPA,
- 25 in an effort to include and analyze the

- 1 missing, but potentially significant, impacts
- 2 raised above.
- 3 Those are our formal comments. I'd like
- 4 to make some informal comments, if I could for
- 5 a minute.
- 6 My work for The Nature Conservancy on
- 7 Long Island is to forge partnerships to
- 8 protect important lands, and the Conservancy
- 9 has identified Plum Island as one of its top
- 10 ten land protection priorities on Long Island.
- 11 If I were to approach Plum Island in the way I
- 12 approach other lands that I have to work on on
- 13 Long Island, I would see -- I would assess the
- 14 situation. I would see that there's an owner
- of a priority site who wants to sell. I would
- 16 then set about trying to work out the terms of
- 17 the transfer that is acceptable to the seller
- 18 and a conservation buyer. I would ask the
- 19 seller, "What are your objectives to selling
- 20 the land?" I would also ask the seller, "At
- 21 what price are you willing to sell?"
- 22 GSA and DHS have stated their objective,
- 23 which they believe has been mandated by
- 24 Congress, is to transfer Plum Island and the
- 25 Orient Point property out of Federal

- 1 ownership. Ostensibly, such a transfer would
- 2 relieve the Federal Government of the
- 3 financial burden of continued ownership and
- 4 management of land it considers surplus to its
- 5 needs. And if the land were auctioned off,
- 6 the sale might bring in a significant amount
- 7 of money to the Federal Treasury. The sellers
- 8 in this case must also identify and mitigate
- 9 adverse impacts from a sale.
- Now, let's assume that I also have a
- 11 consortium of conservation buyers. I would
- 12 expect them to ask me the following: How much
- does the seller want for the property, and
- 14 must it be sold at auction? What can be done
- 15 with the land under local zoning? Are there
- 16 any environmental issues? Are there any other
- 17 contingencies?
- 18 And, at the present time, I would have
- 19 to tell my imaginary consortium of
- 20 conservation buyers that there is no asking
- 21 price or upset price.
- 22 All indications are that the Town of
- 23 Southold will zone the property in conformance
- 24 with its current use. Approximately 15% of
- 25 the site will be zoned for research and

- 1 development, and the remainder, which the Town
- 2 has called a "de facto wildlife preserve,"
- 3 might be zoned for parks and conservation.
- 4 Three, I would have to say there are --
- 5 say to the potential buyers, "Yes, there are
- 6 environmental issues. There are 24 open toxic
- 7 waste sites, and at least two open major fuel
- 8 spills. There's a Spanish American War Fort
- 9 and an historic lighthouse. There are
- 10 wetlands, and flood plains, and rare and
- 11 endangered species. There is a very limited
- 12 and fragile drinking water aguifer." And I'd
- 13 have to tell them, "There's another
- 14 contingency. The seller wants to stay on-site
- and operate a 300-employee Animal Disease
- 16 Research Laboratory for the next ten years."
- 17 At this point, my buyers might ask me to
- 18 leave, or they may say, "Come back when the
- 19 sellers get serious."
- 20 I'd like to close by proposing to GSA
- 21 and DHS that we begin a dialogue to try to
- 22 find mutually satisfactory terms for a
- 23 transfer of the undeveloped portions of Plum
- 24 Island to a new conservation preservation
- 25 owner/manager. We have time to work out the

1 details. Why not give it a try? Thank you. 2 (Applause) 3 MR. WALTON: Before the next speaker, 4 I'd like to make a point of clarification or reiterate a point of -- any questions that are 5 posed and comments tonight, obviously, will 6 not be answered tonight, but will be addressed 7 as a part of the final EIS process. 8 9 Secondly, I'd like to ask any of the 10 remaining speakers who signed up to speak, if 11 the comments that you have are similar to 12 those that have already been made, please 13 don't hesitate to make your comments, but 14 don't feel the need to repeat what's already been said. I don't wish to restrict comment 15 16 at all, but just in the interest of time. Next speaker, James Goldman. 17 Mr. Goldman here? Okay. Then the next 18 speaker, Dan Durett. 19 20 MR. DURETT: Thank you. For the record, 21 my name is Dan Durett. And, also, a point of 22 the privilege, if you will, two points of privilege, if I may. I serve as a substitute 23 24 teacher here at Greenport High School, and on 25 behalf of the student body, which I wish was

1 in attendance, welcome. 2 MR. WALTON: Thank you. MR. DURETT: I would also like to 3 4 acknowledge and honor the men and women who are serving our country so that we have the 5 6 freedom of speech to meet here this evening. 7 (Applause) 8 I was just instructed to perhaps be brief. 9 10 (Laughter) 11 In my brevity, my question would be, are 12 we getting a plum or a lemon, and that would 13 conclude my statement. 14 (Laughter) 15 However, I do have a career as Staff Historian with the National Park Service where 16 I worked on historic preservation projects. 17 18 also have had a career as Director, Minority Initiatives, with the National Council for 19 20 Science and the Environment, and I was the 21 founder of the Department of Environmental 22 Education Programs for the United Negro College Fund. So, having worn those hats, I 23 will avail myself of your indulgence for a few 24 25 more moments.

1 I'm standing here representing the North Fork Environmental Council, I am a Board 2 3 Member. For several years the North Fork Environmental Council has sought the public's 4 understanding and support for a mixed-use 5 6 approach to Plum Island. The critical issues 7 we see include, but are not limited to, one, the vast majority of the Island's open space 8 9 must be preserved for both resident and migrating wildlife. Those preserved lands 10 should include limited access for both casual 11 12 users, nature walkers, bird watchers, 13 etcetera. And formal research and education 14 uses for all local schools, colleges and scientific organizations. 15 16 Many buildings on the Island are so hardened that removal and a return to a 17 18 natural state would be too costly. Therefore, where practical, existing structures should be 19 20 used to create a campus, a sort of incubator 21 for both environmental and alternative energy companies as a way to keep quality jobs on the 22 North Fork, give our youth examples of and 23 access to meaningful local career options and 24 25 mentors, and generate both tax and fee revenue

- 1 from the businesses that locate there, and
- 2 those fees be used for preservation
- 3 initiatives.
- 4 And fourth, that the Cornell University
- 5 -- Cornell Cooperative and other like-minded
- 6 academic and scientific entities should be
- 7 provided storage, lab, classroom and docking
- 8 space in order to facilitate work in such
- 9 critical efforts as the restoration of eel
- 10 grass beds and fish and shellfish nurseries.
- 11 The North Fork Environmental Council
- 12 concurs, that Options 2 and 3 should be taken
- 13 off the books. And I'll have a fuller
- 14 statement in the record as submitted in
- 15 printed form.
- 16 NFEC applauds Southold Town for looking
- 17 at these and other issues, but it needs to do
- 18 even more. Even if we are successful in
- 19 blocking Reuse Options 2 and 3, we cannot be
- 20 naive and think that the operations of a
- 21 wildlife preserve, an incubator for
- 22 alternative energy solutions, and a scientific
- 23 research and education center can exist
- 24 without some full-time residents serving as
- 25 caretakers.

1 Accommodations would also be needed for 2 transient firefighters, police, and general 3 maintenance crews. Therefore, putting into place safeguards such as commercial and 4 residential zoning codes for areas already 5 6 compromised by the existing lab makes sense. 7 Proper governance and control of any operations on the Island must be spelled out 8 9 and put in place prior to the completion of any acquisition scenario. 10 There is another issue the NFEC feels 11 12 strongly about. As you may know, some 30 to 13 40 years after the fact, the U.S. Navy is 14 dealing with not one but several toxic dump sites at the former Calverton Airfield. Given 15 the type of work currently done on Plum 16 17 Island, the length of time such work has been 18 carried out with limited public oversight and with concerns expressed to us by local, county 19 and state elected officials, it is reasonable 20 to believe that before any new operations are 21 22 put in place, the following must take place now, not 30 years down the road: 23 24 One, the U.S. Government must develop a 25 testing plan of groundwater and surface waters

- 1 in conjunction with both the Federal EPA, DEC,
- 2 and Suffolk County Department of Health, and
- 3 that all results of such testing must be made
- 4 public.
- 5 Two, these entities, together with the
- 6 Town of Southold, must develop an appropriate
- 7 remediation plan of any affected areas or
- 8 resources.
- 9 Three, that the full cost of both the
- 10 testing and remediation be borne by the
- 11 Federal Government as a condition of sale to
- 12 any entity.
- 13 If the proposed sale of Plum Island were
- 14 to take place, the Town of Southold must be
- 15 prepared for all possibilities. If we look
- 16 just a few miles to the west in Riverhead
- 17 Town, they're still mired in the mess of the
- 18 acquisition of the EPCAL property.
- 19 I'll close by saying the value of a
- 20 proper and balanced plan for Plum Island can
- 21 serve all of the interests of the residents
- 22 and businesses of the North Fork.
- Gentlemen, I would also commend to you
- 24 two names. Ms. Leanne Nurse at USEPA in the
- 25 Reagan Building works on public participation.

- 1 The efforts you have made, both in Connecticut
- 2 and here, should serve as a model for EPA, so
- 3 I commend you for that.
- 4 Also, I would commend to you Dr. David
- 5 Blockstein at the National Council for Science
- 6 and the Environment. He and I are cofounders
- 7 of that organization.
- 8 But, Ladies and Gentlemen, I close with
- 9 my original statement and I will give you an
- 10 answer. Are we getting a plum or a lemon?
- 11 The answer is if our youth and the students
- 12 who walk through these halls and the halls of
- 13 every school in this town and in Riverhead can
- 14 benefit by our ability as adults to come
- 15 together, then we will have not just a plum,
- 16 but a diamond. Thank you.
- 17 (Applause)
- 18 MR. WALTON: Thank you, Mr. Durett.
- 19 Next, John Turner.
- 20 MR. TURNER: Good evening. My name is
- 21 John Turner, and I am a spokesperson for the
- 22 Preserve Plum Island Coalition. And I want to
- 23 just let you know that I do have some brief
- 24 remarks tonight, but I will be providing much
- 25 more detailed written remarks by the October

- 1 26th deadline.
- 2 I want to thank the staff from both GSA
- 3 and Homeland Security for the opportunity to
- 4 provide some comments tonight.
- 5 For those that aren't familiar with the
- 6 Coalition, the Preserve Plum Island Coalition
- 7 was formed several years ago when we became
- 8 fully aware about the proposal that's before
- 9 us tonight, that is the Federal Government's
- 10 intent to sell off the Island. A number of us
- 11 were dramatically alarmed and concerned about
- 12 that proposal, and have been working ever
- 13 since, meeting with different Congressional
- 14 Offices and Senator's Offices, and whoever
- 15 would hear us, Supervisor Scott Russell in the
- 16 past, to really share our perspective on what
- 17 should happen with the Island.
- 18 And what we believe is that the
- 19 overwhelming majority of the Island, 80 to 95
- 20 -- excuse me -- 85 to 90 percent of the Island
- 21 really merits being included in the National
- 22 Wildlife Refuge System, an outcome that has
- 23 occurred in many other very similar
- 24 circumstances in places not very far from Plum
- 25 Island, including No Man's Island National

- 1 Wildlife Refuge, Sachuest Point National
- 2 Wildlife Refuge, Block Island National
- 3 Wildlife Refuge, and on and on.
- 4 The organization, as I said, consists of
- 5 a wide variety of specific organizations, or I
- 6 should say the coalition does, including civic
- 7 organizations, some business organizations,
- 8 and, not surprisingly, environmental and
- 9 conservation organizations.
- 10 I've reviewed the Environmental Impact
- 11 Statement and I just want to provide some
- 12 brief comments on it. At the risk of sounding
- overly strident, I want to say that I think
- 14 Adrienne's comments about the EIS were kind.
- 15 I think that the EIS is woefully deficient.
- 16 And, quite frankly, I've had the privilege and
- 17 pleasure in my professional career and as an
- 18 advocate reading hundreds of Environmental
- 19 Impact Statements, and I have to say this is
- 20 one of the poorest ones that -- poorest
- 21 quality EISes that I've ever read.
- I don't say that lightly and I don't say
- 23 that to embarrass you, but if you take a look
- 24 at the EIS, while it's a well-written document
- 25 and there's a lot of material in it, it

- 1 doesn't assess, it doesn't analyze. And
- 2 there's just huge informational gaps in it
- 3 that really I think do not allow for you to
- 4 move forward at this time with having a clear
- 5 understanding about what the environment
- 6 impacts of the proposal are.
- 7 And I'd really like to break up my
- 8 thoughts into two areas. One has to do with
- 9 the natural resources and cultural resources
- 10 that exist on the Island, and the impacts that
- 11 are believed to occur to those resources as a
- 12 result of the different options; and, two, to
- 13 talk about a different alternative to the
- 14 Island that really relates to it being
- 15 dedicated as public conservation land, we
- 16 believe, again, most notably as a national
- 17 wildlife refuge.
- With regard to the first issue, I want
- 19 to just raise perhaps just four quick examples
- 20 to you, and Randy actually brought this up
- 21 before with regard to the New York Natural
- 22 Heritage Program Report. This is an excellent
- 23 55-page documentation, thorough, detailed,
- 24 scientifically-based of all of the ecological
- 25 communities and plant and animal species that

1 occur on the Island. And I believe it was put 2 together without the opportunity actually to be on the Island, I think it was done from 3 4 afar. And I have to tell you, the professional 5 6 scientists, the ecologists at the New York 7 National Heritage Program did an outstanding This report is found nowhere in your 8 iob. 9 EIS, and that's mind-boggling how you could 10 possibly talk about the biological and ecological resources of the Island and not 11 12 reference this report. And we say, well, 13 maybe it just came out recently. This report 14 came out in May of this year. I believe we're five months later into October now, and there 15 16 was a public hearing on this on May 22nd of 17 this year not too far from here where the 18 findings of this report were disclosed. So it's inconceivable to find that 19 20 really the definitive document that really 21 characterizes the biological and ecological 22 resources didn't find its way into your EIS. I do know there were some other 23 24 correspondence with the National Heritage 25 Program back in 2010, but it really wasn't

- 1 adequate, and I think that this report really
- 2 should be fully incorporated and integrated
- 3 into the EIS. So that's one recommendation.
- 4 Two, there was comments made about the
- 5 seals that occurred there. The largest seal
- 6 haul-out site in Southern New England occurs
- 7 on the eastern part of the Island. You have a
- 8 half-line mention in the entire
- 9 several-hundred-page EIS about that, and you
- 10 have no discussion at all what would be the
- 11 impacts to those seals and to the integrity of
- 12 that haul-out site if the property was to be
- 13 developed.
- During construction, with all the --
- we're going to take the 750-home construction
- 16 proposal. When people are constructing homes,
- 17 all the construction workers that might be out
- there, and, most notably, once you have many,
- 19 many hundreds of people that are living or
- 20 playing on the Island, you think they will
- 21 have no impact upon the seals? They most
- 22 certainly will. It's been borne out in so
- 23 many other places. Seals don't respond very
- 24 well to human disturbance. That's not talked
- 25 about in the EIS whatsoever.

1 The information about birds is woefully 2 There's two different mentions. inadequate. 3 One says there's something like 121 species 4 that have been found on the Island, another one -- another section of the EIS talks about 5 6 75 species, I believe, something like that. While, as we know now, I believe we're up to 7 191 species of birds have been identified on 8 9 the Island, and that's due to the work that, 10 again, several census -- censusers, if you will, from the local North Fork Audubon 11 12 Chapter, in consultation with New York State 13 Audubon Office, have been conducting for several years. That's remarkable. 14 number is about one-fourth of all the known 15 16 bird species that occur in North America have 17 been seen on Plum Island, making it clear that 18 Plum Island is a critical place for birds and its bird habitat, both for resident birds as 19 20 well as migratory birds. 21 Does the EIS really analyze and assess 22 the impacts to those species under those It doesn't. If you, again, take the 23 options? worst case scenario of the 750 homes, what 24 25 would be the impacts of people with their

- 1 pets, and letting their cats out, what would
- 2 that do to the resident and migratory birds?
- 3 All the houses that I assume are going to have
- 4 big picture windows, because they're going to
- 5 want to enjoy the beautiful view, what's going
- 6 to be the impact of collisions, the number one
- 7 or two causes of bird mortality in North
- 8 America, on the birds that are flying through
- 9 there? What about the disturbance,
- 10 again, with the construction? What about the
- 11 habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation
- 12 that impacts on the bird habitats? That's not
- 13 discussed.
- And so, again, I know I'm coming across
- 15 a bit strong, but the information, I'm reading
- 16 this EIS, I get to this section and there's
- 17 just no real discussion about it. And if
- 18 there is discussion, it's incredibly
- 19 superficial and not really science-based.
- One last example to really drive home
- 21 this point. You talk about the wetlands.
- 22 Again, Adrienne talked about the sole source
- 23 aguifer. You have 750 homes there. The EIS
- 24 concedes that the amount of water that would
- 25 be taken up to service those homes is very

- 1 close or may exceed the carrying capacity, the
- 2 amount of water that's found there, likely
- 3 resulting in both salt water intrusion and
- 4 certainly a lowering of the water table.
- 5 EIS talks about this wonderful 60-acre
- 6 wetland that occurs on the southwestern part
- 7 of the Island, but there's no discussion about
- 8 what would be the impact upon that kind of
- 9 amount -- that amount of water withdrawal on
- 10 the integrity of that wetland. That wetland
- 11 would likely disappear. All you need to do is
- 12 just have a one, or two, or three, or
- 13 four-foot drop in the water table and that
- 14 wetland is gone, it's destroyed. No
- 15 discussion in the EIS about that.
- 16 So those are just a few things of
- 17 actually several dozen more examples that we
- 18 will submit in our written comments to you
- 19 about, again, how we think the EIS,
- 20 unfortunately, is woefully deficient.
- Let me just quickly turn, if I may, to
- 22 the discussion about the alternatives. Randy
- 23 Parsons made mention about the letter that the
- 24 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided to
- 25 you, or written to Mr. Kelly back on October

- 1 19th in 2010. If you haven't seen the letter,
- 2 I just say -- implore the audience to take a
- 3 look at it. It's a seven-page detailed letter
- 4 why the Fish and Wildlife Service believes
- 5 very strongly and lays out a very strong and,
- 6 you know, cogent argument for why the language
- 7 in Section 540, that again GSA has the
- 8 perspective, mandates the sale of the Island.
- 9 It doesn't mandate the sale whatsoever, and,
- 10 in fact, is very constant with the idea of
- 11 actually transferring the property to the Fish
- 12 and Wildlife Service as a refuge.
- 13 And they ask in that letter,
- 14 specifically ask in that letter, if I may just
- 15 make mention of that, they say on Page 4,
- 16 Paragraph 6, "Specifically, there needs to be
- 17 a fully analyzed alternative that would cover
- 18 the transfer, or sale of Plum Island to the
- 19 Service, the State of New York, or a private
- 20 land conservation trust with strict
- 21 limitations on human use and development so as
- 22 to permanently preserve it as a wildlife
- 23 sanctuary or refuge."
- So they've asked, and I fully note the
- 25 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's interest in

- 1 this property. You folks know they're
- 2 interested in this property, they've made that
- 3 abundantly clear to you. I don't know what
- 4 further discussions there have been about
- 5 that. We certainly think it makes a great
- 6 deal of sense to have that alternative spelled
- 7 out. And why do I say that? It goes back to
- 8 Section 540, and I want to read that, if I
- 9 just might very quickly, and then sum up.
- 10 The legislation that the -- again, has
- 11 been driving this whole process, passed
- 12 several years ago, says, "Notwithstanding any
- other provision of law, should the Secretary
- 14 of Homeland Security determine that the
- 15 National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility be
- 16 located at a site other than Plum Island, New
- 17 York, the Secretary shall liquidate the Plum
- 18 Island asset by directing the Administrator of
- 19 General Services to sell through public sale
- 20 all real and related personal property to
- 21 transportation assets."
- 22 If that's all it said, we would agree
- 23 with you, that you have no other course, no
- 24 other -- there's no flexibility or any other
- 25 way to go but to meet the Congressional

- 1 mandate of selling the Island, but that's not
- 2 what section 540 ends at. It goes on to say,
- 3 "Which support Plum Island operations subject
- 4 to such terms and conditions as necessary to
- 5 protect government interests and meet program
- 6 requirements."
- 7 So what could those government interests
- 8 be? They could be the public trust resources
- 9 and the wildlife species that are on the
- 10 Island, a particular fact that the U.S. Fish
- 11 and Wildlife Service made quite clear to you
- 12 in their very detailed letter.
- 13 Congress quite clearly included the
- language to say, "Which support Plum Island
- 15 operations." It's hard to argue that the
- 16 undeveloped part of the Island, that the Plum
- 17 Island Lighthouse, or Fort Terry, or the
- 18 bayberry thickets that occur in the middle
- 19 part of the Island, or the Blackpole Warblers
- 20 that land there on migration, which is a
- 21 migratory stopover site, okay, are actually
- 22 part of the Plum Island operations.
- So, from our perspective, it's quite
- 24 easy to reach the conclusion that a very
- 25 reasonable alternative to develop from this

1 would be to have an alternative that considers 2 a dedication of the undeveloped parts of the Island to the Fish and Wildlife Service as a 3 National Wildlife Refuge, while fulfilling the 4 5 mandate of Congress to sell off the developed 6 and active parts of the Island. We think 7 that's a very easy case to be made. And we're dismayed that both the request 8 9 by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the 10 request that we've actually made at the past scoping, I raised this issue with you at the 11 12 scoping meeting several years ago, has not 13 found its way into the EIS. We think that it 14 must be really included in the EIS, and we respectfully urge that that be included. 15 16 So, again, to summarize it, I'm sorry 17 for going as long as I did, really summarizes 18 the perspective of the Coalition. And, again, we will be providing much more detailed 19 written comments before the deadline. Thanks 20 21 from your time. 22 (Applause) 23 MR. WALTON: Ms. Louise Harrison. MS. HARRISON: Good evening. My name is 24 25 Louise Harrison. I'm a Conservation

- 1 Biologist, and I've served in Environmental
- 2 Protection on Long Island since 1980. I've
- 3 worked for Federal, State and County agencies,
- 4 as well as in leadership and consulting
- 5 positions for environmental nonprofits.
- 6 Through conservation and natural areas
- 7 planning, which is my consulting interest, I
- 8 only represent the interests of nonprofits,
- 9 municipalities, civics and individuals who
- 10 wish to protect their natural resources. I'm
- 11 representing myself tonight. I live in the
- 12 Town of Southold. My consulting company is
- 13 based in Setauket, New York.
- By way of background, I served in the
- 15 Suffolk County Office of Ecology as the Head
- 16 of its Bureau of Environmental Management for
- 17 six years. I undertook fresh water wetland
- 18 protection at the New York State Department of
- 19 Environmental Conservation in the mid 1980s,
- 20 and I worked for Long Island State Parks prior
- 21 to that as the Regional Naturalist.
- While at the New York State Department
- 23 of State, which is -- which runs the Coastal
- 24 Management Program for New York, in the early
- 25 1990s, I identified the most regionally

- 1 important natural areas, the acronym is RINA,
- 2 along New York's Long Island Sound shoreline
- 3 and helped create State policy to protect
- 4 those areas through the Long Island Sound
- 5 Coastal Management Program.
- 6 The Plum Island DEIS preparers,
- 7 yourselves, apparently do not realize that
- 8 Plum Island is part of the, quote, Eastern
- 9 Island's, R-I-N-A, or RINA, recognized by the
- 10 Long Island Sound Coastal Management Program.
- 11 This fact should be acknowledged in the DEIS.
- 12 The proposed sale and the alternatives
- 13 presented in the document should be examined
- in light of New York's management objectives
- 15 for regionally important natural areas,
- 16 because Plum Island is a New York State
- 17 priority, and, therefore, a government
- 18 interest.
- 19 I've been involved in countless open
- 20 space preservation efforts, and I've served in
- 21 appointed and volunteer positions on Federal,
- 22 State and Town environmental committees. I
- 23 served for nine years as a commissioner for
- 24 the Long Island North Shore Heritage Area and
- 25 was a key leader in that planning effort.

- 1 I've had extensive field experience
- 2 investigating Long Island's natural ecosystems
- 3 and coastal environment from New York City to
- 4 Montauk, Orient Point and Fishers Island. As
- 5 do many of my colleagues here tonight, I know
- 6 Long Island Sound and its coastal resources
- 7 very well.
- 8 I've reviewed hundreds of EISes
- 9 throughout my career, more recently as a
- 10 Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- 11 Service and Liaison to the USEPA's Long Island
- 12 Sound Study National Estuary Program. I
- 13 quided numerous Federally-funded habitat
- 14 restoration, stewardship and land acquisition
- 15 programs on Long Island and in Connecticut.
- 16 The Orient Point to Plum Island
- 17 stewardship area received much attention by
- 18 the Sound Study National Estuary Program,
- 19 leading to funding of a grant to prepare an
- 20 important bird area stewardship plan by New
- 21 York State Audubon. You see, protection of
- 22 Plum Island's natural resources is a Federal
- 23 priority and, therefore, a government
- 24 interest.
- 25 Tonight I do not intend to repeat the

- 1 expert testimony of my colleagues and friends
- 2 in conservation. Rather, I'd like to echo
- 3 them and to add a few points.
- 4 When people say Plum Island is unique,
- 5 it's more than saying it is beautiful or a
- 6 gem. Unique really does mean like no other.
- 7 That's why it is globally significant to
- 8 endangered species such as the Roseate Tern.
- 9 That makes it irreplaceable. It means that
- 10 wetland mitigation banking or other
- 11 credit-type mitigation suggestions have no
- 12 place in a situation like this.
- 13 A fresh water wetland, for instance, in
- 14 another location cannot perform the ecological
- 15 functions that one on Plum Island can because
- of where it is, on an island surrounded by
- 17 salt water that happens to be exactly where
- 18 this island sits in juxtaposition to nearby
- 19 islands without fresh water wetlands.
- 20 Scarce fresh water resources in a
- 21 maritime island chain are critically important
- 22 to wildlife and cannot be replaced in function
- 23 anywhere else. Wetlands and other features on
- 24 Plum Island, such as the rocky shoreline that
- 25 enables seals to haul out and rest are unique

- 1 because of where they are as much as for the
- 2 geological and biological elements making them
- 3 up.
- 4 The Island's isolation from the mainland
- 5 and Long Island, its position in the chain of
- 6 islands that reaches to Fishers Island is the
- 7 key to its usefulness to the many fish and
- 8 wildlife species that breed there, feed there
- 9 and call it home.
- 10 The DEIS needs to pay attention to the
- 11 particular biogeography of Plum Island,
- 12 viewing it in its context of its position
- 13 relative to the end of Long Island and the
- 14 other islands, Great Gull, Little Gull,
- 15 Fishers, as well as its relative size and its
- 16 diversity of habitats.
- 17 The fragility and long-term viability of
- 18 numerous Federally and State-listed endangered
- 19 threatened and rare species using Plum Island
- 20 and its nearby waters should be carefully
- 21 analyzed, giving full recognition to its
- 22 physical location and context, again, in the
- 23 Island chain and Plum Island's maritime
- 24 surroundings. The Long Island Sound Study
- 25 recognizes this context, New York State

- 1 recognizes it, too.
- 2 In my opinion, Plum Island should be
- 3 part of a National Wildlife Refuge, giving
- 4 reuse opportunities only where its present
- 5 infrastructure can be refitted or salvaged for
- 6 research activities. Research on the impacts
- 7 of climate change, on sensitive coastal
- 8 resources, in my opinion, would be most
- 9 fitting.
- No one's making land like this anymore.
- 11 I agree with it and I paraphrase my friend,
- 12 Randy Parsons, of The Nature Conservancy, who
- 13 has said that if America wasn't selling a
- 14 piece of itself right now, we would be trying
- 15 to buy this land for America.
- 16 Thank you for the opportunity to express
- 17 my concerns tonight, and I'd like the chance
- 18 to submit additional testimony by letter.
- 19 MR. WALTON: Thank you.
- 20 MS. HARRISON: Thank you. These are the
- 21 copies I made.
- 22 (Applause)
- 23 MR. WALTON: Daniel Flynn. Daniel
- 24 Flynn? Okay. Then finally, Alex --
- MS. SMITH: No.

1 MR. WALTON: I'm sorry? 2 MS. SMITH: Not finally. 3 MR. WALTON: Not finally, almost 4 finally. 5 MS. SMITH: Almost finally. 6 MR. WALTON: Alex Erey? 7 MR. EREY: Yes. It's late, everybody's 8 tired, and my voice is going. Hello, 9 everyone. I'm a concerned citizen, living in -- around Orient Bay, nothing more than that. 10 I'm very disappointed in the meeting, 11 12 gentlemen. We are five working days away from 13 final comments being sent in. Valuable 14 comments given here, we're compressed to the end when everybody's tired. I don't know how 15 16 well you took notes, I hope you did, and I'll 17 limit my comments to full feelings I want to 18 voice. One, I want to voice a feeling; two, a 19 20 wish; three, an apprehension; and four, a 21 vision. 22 Feeling: I saw consultants and Homeland 23 Security here. They are wonderful agencies that are concerned with the how of things, 24 25 which law, how we do that, how do we analyze,

- 1 not the what of things. What do we do? I
- 2 didn't see that. I saw very little of what we
- 3 do.
- 4 My wish, second point, was to see here
- 5 agricultural fisheries, wildlife. I didn't
- 6 see any presented from there, only concerned
- 7 people about them. We would have heard more
- 8 about the purpose and less about the process.
- 9 That's my disappointment, process. "How"
- 10 should take second place to what are we doing,
- 11 what's our purpose.
- 12 My apprehension: We are rushing,
- 13 rushing madly, and we will make a wrong
- 14 decision.
- 15 My vision: I wish this area to be
- 16 developed for agricultural purposes. Long
- 17 Island was traditionally potato and cabbage
- 18 land. We are developing many new crops, we
- 19 can develop many more. As you said, Cornell
- 20 helps a lot all around the place. That
- 21 results should be tapped on; fisheries, the
- 22 same point. Oysters have disappeared and
- 23 suddenly they are back, and many more things
- 24 can come back. And this pristine land can be
- 25 used to develop those, and those will bring

- 1 revenue, will bring money, will bring tax
- 2 dollars, that our Southold Town wants tax
- 3 dollars.
- 4 And finally, I'd like to see also what I
- 5 heard and inspired me, is renewable energy
- 6 being developed there. Thank you very much.
- 7 Good night.
- 8 (Applause)
- 9 MR. WALTON: The final speaker,
- 10 Ms. Margarite Smith.
- MS. SMITH: Good evening, and perhaps
- 12 the last star speaking or the first. I am
- 13 Margarite Smith, I'm a Shinnecock Indian, and
- 14 I am here to present some unofficial comments
- of our nation. We will be providing official
- 16 comments.
- 17 My thinking, based upon what I've heard
- 18 tonight, is perhaps there'll be an extension
- 19 beyond October 26th, I wonder, a comment and
- 20 perhaps a concern, so that there can be more
- 21 detail provided.
- We became a Federally recognized Indian
- 23 Tribe in the year 2010, but our forefathers,
- 24 foremothers, and I speak for myself and the
- 25 two young ladies who accompanied me tonight,

- 1 have occupied this land, as you know, for
- 2 thousands of years. We are concerned about
- 3 the archeology that may have been done on this
- 4 territory, both before the construction of the
- 5 current facility and what might have been done
- 6 in more recent times. What do we know
- 7 about that area? What we know is that our
- 8 people traveled this way across the Sound. We
- 9 are on the South Fork, where our current
- 10 homeland occupied is on the South Fork, but we
- 11 traveled across for thousands of years. You
- 12 have it documented for hundreds of years, and
- 13 so we are concerned whether there are human
- 14 remains.
- We are certainly concerned about all
- 16 natural and cultural resources that may be and
- 17 may -- in this area, and that may not yet have
- 18 been fully identified, and that may -- so that
- 19 there would be proper protections of all.
- The Shinnecock Nation will request and
- 21 certainly insist upon all sharing of
- 22 information as is due to the Nation, all
- 23 appropriate consultation at every stage going
- 24 forward in this -- with this project. We have
- 25 much study to do. I keep looking at this

- 1 thing.
- We have much study to do about specific
- 3 historical concerns and contemporary uses.
- 4 This summer, some of you may have been
- 5 familiar that this summer some of our young
- 6 people, and some people in their fifties,
- 7 indeed, but not myself, paddled across from
- 8 Shinnecock Bay and across -- and Peconic Bay
- 9 and across the Sound in an historical route up
- 10 to Connecticut, to our brother and sister
- 11 tribes in Connecticut.
- 12 This is a valued area to us. As a
- 13 Federally recognized tribe, we take not only
- 14 the current lands we occupy, but the greater
- 15 environment. I hear discussion of regional
- 16 importance. It is a region of importance to
- 17 us, and we ask that you do the proper studies,
- 18 that your EIS had a more complete assessment
- 19 of all resources, including human and cultural
- 20 resources as may be present, as well as the
- 21 species.
- I was reminded that we -- we are
- 23 concerned about the rare species, and birds,
- 24 and turtles, and other occupants of that, this
- land pretty much unknown to me, but probably

- 1 better known to many people in this room. We
- 2 need to make sure that what you do know is
- 3 addressed and analyzed in a way that does not
- 4 obfuscate our history and that does give us
- 5 appropriate guidance for the future.
- I think I will -- well, because I'm the
- 7 last and it is late, I'll end at this point,
- 8 but I am pleased to know that so many are
- 9 concerned. And we look forward to having you
- 10 join us in our study and in our preservation
- 11 efforts. Our culture is now much entwined
- 12 with your culture, but it is world culture
- 13 that must be protected for generations going
- 14 forward. Thank you.
- 15 (Applause)
- 16 MR. WALTON: Thank you, Ms. Smith. And
- 17 thank you all for your participation tonight,
- 18 for your comments, your thoughtfulness.
- 19 Again, a reminder. As indicated here,
- 20 written comments will continue to be accepted
- 21 in a variety of formats. The website perhaps
- 22 is the easiest. But, as listed there, "Phil
- 23 Youngberg, care of John Dugan, General
- 24 Services Administration, contact for any
- 25 comments." And, again, we thank you tonight

```
for your participation, your attendance, and
 1
     good night.
 2
 3
                          (Applause)
                (Time Noted: 8:41 p.m.)
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1	CERTIFICATION
2	
3	STATE OF NEW YORK)
4) SS:
5	COUNTY OF SUFFOLK)
6	
7	I, LUCIA BRAATEN, a Court Reporter and
8	Notary Public for and within the State of New
9	York, do hereby certify:
10	THAT, the above and foregoing contains a
11	true and correct transcription of the
12	proceedings taken on October 18, 2012.
13	I further certify that I am not
14	related to any of the parties to this action
15	by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way
16	interested in the outcome of this matter.
17	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have herunto
18	set my hand this 30th day of October, 2012.
19	
20	Lucia Braaten
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
1	

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